













The World's Classics

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NINE STORIES  
(1855-63)  
By LEO TOLSTOY

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# NINE STORIES

1855-63

By LEO TOLSTÓY

*Translated by*

LOUISE AND AYLMER MAUDE



*Geoffrey Cumberlege*

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LEO TOLSTÓY

Born, Yásnaya Polyána, Túla

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## INTRODUCTION

The nine stories in this book are those which—besides *Childhood*, *Boyhood and Youth* and *Tales of Artyur*—Tolstóy wrote before he began his great novel *War and Peace* and *Anna Karénina*.

Five of them are semi-autobiographical, dealing in fictional form with experiences of his own.

*A Billiard-Marker's Notes* grew out of his stay at Tiflis in 1851, when he went there for his examinations to qualify for a commission in the army. He tells in his Diary of having 'played for points with a marker and lost . . . indeed I might have lost my all.'

*The Snow Storm* relates an incident that occurred in January 1854 when he was returning home from the Caucasus before proceeding to take part in the Crimean War.

*Two Hussars* was the first story he wrote dealing with a theme rather outside his own personal experience. The description of the elder Túrbin (like that of Eróshka in *The Cossacks*, and later on Hadji Murad) shows how attracted he was by strong, fearless, intense personality made all in one piece—*tsélni*, as the Russians call it—who regardless of scruples goes direct to his goal, unlike Tolstóy himself who often felt drawn in different directions.

The next two stories deal with serfdom—which was the burning problem of that day. The Imperial Decree of Emancipation was issued in February 1861, and the liberation of the serfs was gradually carried out during the following years. The matter was one closely affecting Tolstóy, who had made earnest efforts to emancipate his own serfs soon but had been prevented from doing so by the fact that his estate, with the serfs on it, was mortgaged.

The first of these serf stories is *A Landlord's Morning*, originally planned as part of a full-sized novel.

*Polikúshka* is on the same theme. In it Tolstóy, with many ironic touches, shows up the evils of the system without depicting either the serf-owner or serf as inhuman. The impression the story made at the time is indicated by Turgénev's remarks in a letter to his friend Fet:

After you left, I read Tolstóy's *Polikúshka* and marvelled at the strength of his huge talent. But he has used too much material, and it is a pity he drowned the story. It makes it too terrible. But there are pages that are truly wonderful. It makes a cold shudder run down my back, though you know my back has grown thick and coarse. He is a master, a master!

*Lucerne* tells of something that happened during Tolstóy's first visit to Western Europe. His cousin, Countess Alexandra Tolstóy, who was in charge of the daughters of the Grand Duchess Marie of Liechtenberg, recounts that on reaching Lucerne a few days after Tolstóy she found him terribly excited and flaming with indignation:

'This is what he told us had happened the previous evening. An itinerant musician had played for a long time under the balcony of the Schweizerhof Hotel, where a considerable company of people were sitting. Every one enjoyed the performance, but when he raised his cap for reward no one threw him a single sou—an unpleasant fact, certainly, but one to which Tolstóy attributed almost criminal dimensions.

'To retaliate on the smart public there assembled he took the musician by the arm and, seating him at his own table, ordered supper and champagne for him. I hardly think the guests, or even the poor musician himself, quite appreciated the irony of this action. It characterized both the writer and the man.'

*Libert*, less closely copied from any actual occurrence, grew out of an encounter with a talented but



drunken musician, Rudolph, whom Tolstóy met in Petersburg and took to Yásnaya Polyána, hoping to study music with him and cure him of his intemperance.

*Three Deaths* expresses Tolstóy's consciousness of the futility and exactingness often met with among educated and well-to-do people. In it he contrasts the querulous invalid lady with the dying peasant and the useful tree which made no demands on any one.

Walking with Turgénev one day in the country Tolstóy noticed a decrepit old horse in an enclosure and proceeded to describe its feelings so convincingly that Turgénev remarked: 'I am sure, Leo Léóvich, that you must once have been a horse yourself.' What connexion that incident had with the writing of *Strider: The Story of a Horse* is uncertain, but what is definitely known is that the poet, M. A. Stakhóvich, began a story entitled *The Adventures of a Piebald Gelding*, but died without completing it. A member of his family told the outline of the story to Tolstóy, and in 1863 the latter drafted one on similar lines but not being satisfied with it left it unfinished. Much later, in 1885, his wife who was then publishing a collected edition of his works and wanted some fresh material for it, persuaded him to revise the story and add a conclusion, which he did, dedicating it to M. A. Stakhóvich.

AYLMER MAI

*December*

## A BILLIARD-MARKER'S NOTES



## A BILLIARD-MARKER'S NOTES

IT was going on for three when it happened. The gentlemen playing were 'the big guest' (as our people called him), the prince (who always goes about with him), the gentleman with whiskers, the little hussar, Oliver (the one who has been an actor), and the *pan*.<sup>1</sup> There were a good many people.

The big guest was playing with the prince. I just go round the table with the rest in my hand, counting 'ten and forty-eight, twelve and forty-eight'. Everybody knows what it is to be a billiard-marker. You haven't had a bite all day, nor slept for two nights, but you must keep calling the score and taking the balls out. I go on counting and look round—there's a new gentleman coming in at the door. He looks and looks and then sits down on the sofa. All right.

'Who may that be?—Of what class, I mean?' think I to myself. He was well dressed—oh, very smartly—all his clothes looked as if they had just come out of a bandbox: fine cloth checked trousers, short fashionable coat, a plush waistcoat, and a gold chain with all sorts of little things hanging from it.

Handsomely dressed, but still handsomer himself: slim, tall, hair brushed to the front, latest fashion, and with a red and white complexion—in a word, a fine fellow.

Of course, in our business we see all sorts of people: the grandest that ever were and much trash also, so that though you are a marker you fit in with people, if you are artful enough I mean.

I looked at the gentleman and noticed that he was sitting quietly and did not know anybody, and his clothes were as new as could be. So I think to

<sup>1</sup> *Pan* in Polish and Ukrainian means 'squire' or 'gentleman'.

myself: 'He is either a foreigner—an Englishman—or some count who has turned up. He bears himself well although he is young.' Oliver was sitting beside him and even moved to make room for him.

The game was finished—the big guest had lost and shouted at me:

'You always blunder! You keep looking at something else instead of counting properly.'

He swore, threw down the cue, and went out. What can you make of it? He'll play a fifty-ruble game with the prince of an evening, but now when he loses a bottle of Burgundy he's quite beside himself. He's that kind of character! Sometimes he plays with the prince till two in the morning. They don't put their stakes in the pockets,<sup>1</sup> and I know they haven't either of them got any money, but they just swagger.

'Shall we play double or quits for twenty-five?'

'All right.'

But if you just dare to yawn or don't put a ball right - after all, one is not made of stone—then they just jump down your throat:

'We are not playing for chips, but for money!'

That one plagues me more than all the rest . . .

Well—so the prince says to the new gentleman, when the big one has gone:

'Would you care to have a game with me?'

'With pleasure!' he says.

As long as he was sitting down he looked quite a sport, and seemed to have plenty of confidence, but when he got up and came to the table he was—not exactly timid—no, he was not timid, but one could see he was upset. Whether he was uncomfortable in his new clothes, or frightened because everybody

<sup>1</sup> The players put the money they staked in the pockets of the billiard-table, and the player who pocketed a ball took the money when he took the ball out.

was looking at him, anyhow his confidence was gone. He walked somehow sideways, his pocket catching the table pockets. When chalking the cue he dropped the chalk, and when he did get a ball into a pocket he kept looking round and blushing. Not like the prince—he was used to it—he would chalk the cue and his hand, turn up his sleeve, and just smash the balls into the pockets, small as he was.

They played two or three games—I don't quite remember—and the prince put down the cue and said:

'Allow me to ask your name . . .'

'Nekhlyúdob,' he says.

'Didn't your father command a corps?'

'Yes,' he says.

Then they began talking quickly in French, and I didn't understand. Probably talking about their relations.

'*Au revoir*,' says the prince, 'I'm very glad to have made your acquaintance.'

He washed his hands and went out to get something to eat, but the other remained beside the table with his cue, shoving the balls about.

Of course everyone knows in our business that the ruder one is with a newcomer the better, so I began collecting the balls. He blushed and said:

'Can I go on playing?'

'Of course,' I says, 'that's what the billiard-table is for—to be played on.'

But I didn't look at him and put away the cues.

'Will you play with me?'

'Of course, sir,' say I.

I placed the balls.

'Is it to be a crawl?'

'What do you mean by a crawl?'

So I say: 'You pay half a ruble, and I crawl under the table if I lose.'

Of course never having seen such a thing it seemed funny to him and he laughed.

'Let's!' he says.

'All right. How much will you allow me?' I ask.

'Why, do you play worse than I?'

'Of course,' I say. 'I can see there are few players to match you.'

We began to play. He really thought himself a master at it. He banged the balls about dreadfully, and the *pan* sat there and kept saying:

'What a ball! What a stroke!'

What indeed! He could make strokes, but there was no calculation about it. Well, I lost the first game as is the usual thing, and began crawling under the table and groaning. Here Oliver and the *pan* jumped up and knocked with their cues.

'Splendid! Go on!' they said. 'Go on!'

Go on indeed! The *pan* especially . . . for half a ruble he would himself have been glad not only to crawl under the table but under the Blue Bridge. And then he shouted:

'Splendid!' he says. 'But you haven't swept up all the dust yet.'

I am Petrúshka the marker. Everybody knows me. It used to be Tyúrik the marker, but now it is Petrúshka.

But of course I did not show my game. I lost another one.

'I can't play level with you, sir,' I says.

He laughed. Then after I had won three games—and when he had a score of forty-nine and I nothing, I put my cue on the table and said: 'Will you make it double or quits, sir?'

'Quits, what do you mean?' he says.

'Either you'll owe me three rubles, or nothing,' I say.

'What?' he says. 'Am I playing you for money? You fool!'

He even blushed.

Very well. He lost the game.

'Enough!' he says.

He got out his pocket-book, quite a new one bought at the *Magasin Anglais*, and opened it. I see that he wants to show off. It was chock full of notes, all hundred-ruble ones.

'No,' he says, 'there's no change there,' and he took three rubles out of his purse.

'There you are,' he says, 'two for the games, and the rest for you to have a drink.'

'Thank you very much,' I say. I saw he was a nice gentleman. One can do a little crawling for such as him. The pity was that he didn't want to play for money—'or else,' think I, 'I'd manage to get maybe twenty or even forty rubles of him.'

When the *pan* saw the young gentleman's money he says: 'Would you care to play a game with me? You play so splendidly!' he says, fawning on him like a fox.

'No,' he says, 'excuse me, please, I haven't time,' and he went away.

I don't know who that *pan* was. Someone nicknamed him 'the *pan*' and the name stuck to him. He'd sit all day long in the billiard-room looking on. He had been beaten and sworn at, and no one would play with him. He would bring his pipe and sit by himself and smoke. But he could play a careful game . . . the beast!

Well, Nekhlyúdob came a second and a third time and began coming often. He'd come in the morning and in the evening. Billiards, pool, snooker, he learnt them all. He grew bolder, got to know everybody, and began to play a decent game.



Naturally, being a young man of good family and with money, everybody respected him. Only once he had a row with the big guest.

It was all about a trifle.

They played pool—the prince, the big guest, Nekhlyúdob, Oliver, and someone else. Nekhlyúdob stands by the stove talking to someone, it was the big one's turn to play. His ball happened to come just opposite the stove: there was not much room there, and he likes to play with a big swing.

Well, whether he didn't see Nekhlyúdob or did it on purpose, he took a big swing at the ball and hit Nekhlyúdob hard in the chest with the butt of his cue. The poor fellow even groaned a little. And what next? He didn't even say 'beg pardon'—the rude fellow—but went on without looking at him, and even muttered: 'Why do they shove themselves forward? It has made me lose a ball.' As if there was not plenty of room!

The other goes up to him, very pale, and says quite politely as if nothing had happened: 'You should apologize first, sir. You pushed me.'

'It's not the time for me to apologize. I ought to have won,' he says, 'and now that fellow will score off my ball.'

The other says again: 'You must apologize.'

'Be off!' he says. 'Pestering like this!' and keeps looking at his ball.

Nekhlyúdob came still nearer and took hold of his arm

'You're a boor, sir,' he says.

For all that he's slim and young and rosy as a girl, yet his eyes glittered as fierce as if he were ready to eat him. The big guest is a strong man, and tall. Much bigger than Nekhlyúdob.

'What?' he says. 'Do you call me a boor?'

And he shouts, and lifts his arm to strike him, but

the others there jumped up, seized their arms, and dragged them apart.

They talk and talk—and Nekhlyúdob says:

'Let him give me satisfaction! He has insulted me,' he says—meaning that he wanted him to fight a duel. Of course they were gentlefolk—they have such customs . . . nothing can be done with them . . . in a word, they're gentlefolk!

'I won't give him any kind of satisfaction. He's only a boy—that's all he is. I'll pull his ears for him.'

'If you don't want to fight,' he says, 'you are not an honourable man.' And he himself was almost weeping.

'And you're just an urchin-- it's impossible for you to insult me!'

Well, they got them apart and took them into separate rooms, as is usually done. Nekhlyúdob was friendly with the prince.

'For God's sake go and persuade him to accept a duel,' he says. 'He was drunk, but he may have come to his senses by this time. The affair must not end like this.'

The prince went. The big one says:

'I have fought duels and I have fought in war, but I won't fight a mere lad—I don't want to: that's all about it.'

Well, they talked and talked and finally left off; only the big guest left off coming to our place.

As far as sensitiveness went Nekhlyúdob was like a cockerel, very ambitious, but in other matters he had no sense at all. I remember once the prince says to him: 'Whom have you with you here?'

'Nobody,' he says

'How's that—nobody?'

'Why should there be anybody?'

'What do you mean by "Why should there be anybody?"'

'I've lived by myself up to now,' he says, 'so why is it impossible?'

'Lived by yourself? You don't mean it!'

And the prince roars with laughter, and the whiskered gentleman too. They did make fun of him!

'So you've never . . .?' they say.

'Never!'

They died with laughter. Of course I understood at once why they laughed at him so. I watched to see what would come of it.

'Come along now,' says the prince. 'At once!'

'No, not on any account,' he says.

'Come, that's enough, it's too ridiculous,' he says. 'Have a drink to buck you up, and come along.'

I brought them a bottle of champagne. They drank it, and took the youngster along. "

They returned after midnight and sat down to supper. There were a lot of them—all the very best: Atánov, Prince Rázin, Count Shustákh, and Mírtsov. They all congratulate Nekhlyúdob and laugh. They called me in, and I see they are all rather gay.

'Congratulate the gentleman!' they say.

'On what?' I ask.

Whatever did he call it? . . . On his *initiation or instigation*—I don't quite remember.

'I have the honour to congratulate you,' I say.

And he sits there, quite red, and only smiles. How they laughed!

Well, they come afterwards into the billiard-room all very merry, but Nekhlyúdob was unlike himself: his eyes were bleared, his lips twitching, and he kept hiccoughing and couldn't say a word properly. Of course, it being the first time, he was feeling bowled over. He went up to the table, put his elbows on it, and said:

'To you it seems funny, but I am sad. Why did I do it? I shall not forgive myself, or you, prince, for it all my life!'

And he bursts into tears and weeps. Of course he had drunk too much and didn't know himself what he was saying. The prince went up to him smiling.

'That's enough!' he says. 'It's a mere trifle! . . . Come home, Anatole.'

'I won't go anywhere. Why did I do it?' And he sobs. He wouldn't go away from the billiard-table, and that was all there was to it. What it is when a fellow is young and not used to it . . . And he spoilt the table there and then. Next day he paid eighty rubles for having cut the cloth.

So he often used to come to us. Once he came in with the prince and the whiskered gentleman who always went about with the prince. He was an official, or a retired officer—Heaven only knows—but the gentlemen all called him 'Fedót'. He had high cheekbones and was very ugly, but dressed well and came in a carriage. Why the gentlemen liked him so, God only knows. It's 'Fedót, Fedót,' and you see them treating him to food and drink, paying for him. But he was a desperate fellow! If he lost he did not pay, but if he won—that was different! The big guest has abused him and beaten him before my eyes, and challenged him to a duel. . . . But he always went about arm-in-arm with the prince. 'You'd be lost without me!' he says. 'I'm Fedót and the others are not.' Such a wag.

Well, so they come in, and say:

'Let's play pool, the three of us.'

'All right,' they say.

They began playing for three-ruble stakes. Nekhlyúdob and the prince jabber together. 'You should just see,' he says, 'what a foot she has!'

'Never mind her foot—it's her hair that's so beautiful.'

Of course they didn't attend to the game but only talked together. But Fedót knows his business and plays trickily while they miss or run in. And he wins six rubles of each of them. Heaven only knows what accounts he had with the prince—they never paid one another any money; but Nekhlyúdob got out two three-ruble notes and held them out to him.

'No,' he says, 'I won't take the money from you. Let's play an ordinary game—double or quits, I mean either twice as much or nothing.'

I placed the balls for them. Fedót took odds and they began the game. Nekhlyúdob made strokes just to show off, and when he had a chance to pocket a ball and run out, he says: 'No, I don't want it—it's too easy,' but Fedót doesn't neglect his business and keeps on scoring. Of course he didn't show what he could do, but won the game as if by chance.

'Let's play double or quits again,' he says.

'All right.'

He won again.

'We began with a trifle,' he says. 'I don't want to take so much from you. Double or quits again, yes?'

'Yes.'

Say what one will one's sorry to lose fifty rubles, and Nekhlyúdob himself says: 'Let's have double or quits again.' So it went on and on, more and more. At last he'd lost two hundred and eighty rubles. Fedót knows all the tricks: he would lose a single stake and win a double; and the prince sits there and sees that things are getting serious.

'*Assez*,' he says, '*assez!*'

Not a bit of it! They keep increasing the stakes.

At last Nekhlyúdob owed him over five hundred rubles. Fedót puts down his cue and says:

## A BILLIARD-MARKER'S NOTES

'Haven't we had enough? I am tired,' he says.

But really he was ready to play till sunrise if there was money in it—all his craftiness of course. The other was still more anxious to go on. 'Let's play, let's play!' he says

'No, really I'm tired . . . Come upstairs. You can take your revenge there.'

At our place gentlemen played cards upstairs. They'd start with preference and then go on to a gambling game.

Well, from that day on Fedót netted Nekhlyúdob so that he began coming to us every day. They'd have a game or two, and then it was 'Upstairs, upstairs!'

What they did there Heaven only knows, but Nekhlyúdob became a different man, and everything was flourishing with Fedót.

Formerly Nekhlyúdob had been smart, clean, his hair well brushed; but now he was only like his real self in the morning; after having been upstairs he would come down dishevelled, with fluff on his coat and his hands dirty.

One day he comes down with the prince like that, pale, his lips trembling, and disputing about something.

'I won't permit *him*,' he says, 'to tell me I am . . . '—however did he put it? . . . 'unwell-mannered' or something like that—'and that *he* won't win against me. I have paid *him*,' he says, 'ten thousand rubles so *he* ought to be more careful before others.'

'Come now,' says the prince, 'is it worth being angry with Fedót?'

'No,' he says, 'I won't put up with it.'

'Stop!' he says. 'How can you lower yourself so far as to have an affair with Fedót?'

'But outsiders were present.'

'What if there were outsiders! If you like, I'll make him beg your pardon at once.'

'No,' says he.

And they jabbered something in French that I did not understand. Well, what do you think? That same evening they had supper with Fedót and the friendship continued.

Well, he'd sometimes come along.

'How is it?' he'd say. 'Do I play well?'

Of course it's our business to please everyone. 'Very well,' I say. But lord!—he just knocks the balls about without any kind of judgement. And ever since he got thick with Fedót he always played for money. Before that he did not like playing for any kind of stakes, not even for a lunch or champagne. Sometimes the prince would say:

'Let's play for a bottle of champagne.'

'No,' he'd say, 'I'd rather just order one. Hullo there! Bring a bottle of champagne!'

But now he began to play only for money. He'd walk up and down all day at our place either playing billiards with someone or going upstairs. So I thinks to myself: 'Why should others get it all, and not me?'

'Why haven't you played with me for such a long time, sir?' I says.

And we started playing.

When I had won some five rubles of him: 'Shall we play double or quits, sir?' I says.

He doesn't answer—doesn't say 'Fool!' as he did before. So we play double or quits again and again. I won some eighty rubles of him. Well, what d'you think? He played with me every day. Only he'd wait till no one else was there, because of course he was ashamed to play with a marker. One day he happened to get a bit excited when he already owed me some sixty rubles.

A BILLIARD-MARKER'S NOTE

'Shall we play for the whole amount?' he says.  
'All right,' I say.

I won.

'One hundred and twenty to one hundred and twenty?'

'All right.'

I won again.

'Two hundred and forty to two hundred and forty?'

'Isn't that too much?' I says

He doesn't answer. We play. I win again.

'Four hundred and eighty to four hundred and eighty?'

I say: 'Why should I take advantage of you, sir? Play for a hundred rubles or leave it as it is.'

How he did shout! And how quiet he used to be!

'I'll knock you to bits!' he says. 'Either you play or you don't!'

Well, I see there is no help for it.

'Let it be three hundred and eighty,' I says.

Of course I meant to lose.

I allowed him forty points. His score was fifty-two and mine thirty-six. He potted the yellow and scored eighteen,<sup>1</sup> but left my ball standing well.

I struck the ball hard to make it rebound. No good, it cannoned and ran in and won the game again.

'Listen, Peter,' he says—he did not call me 'Petrúshka'—'I can't pay you the whole now, but in two months' time I could pay you three thousand, if necessary.'

And he flushed quite red and his voice even trembled.

'Very good, sir,' I says, and put down the cue.

<sup>1</sup> In the game of 'five balls' to pot the yellow ball in the middle pocket scores twelve, and to run in off it counts six, so that the two together at one stroke scores eighteen.



He paced up and down a bit and the perspiration just ran down his face.

'Peter,' he says, 'let's play for the whole amount!'

He was nearly crying.

I say:

'What, play again, sir?'

'Do please!'

And he hands me the cue himself. I took the cue and flung the balls on the table so that they fell onto the floor—of course I had to show off—and I say: 'All right, sir!'

He was in such a hurry that he himself picked a ball up. I thought to myself: 'I shan't get the seven hundred away, so I might as well lose.' So I purposely played badly. And what do you think?

'Why,' he says, 'do you play badly on purpose?'

And his hands tremble, and when a ball rolls towards a pocket he spreads out his fingers, his mouth goes awry, and he stretches his head and his hands towards the pocket. So that I say:

'That won't help, sir!'

Well, when he had won that game, I says:

'You'll owe me a hundred and eighty rubles and a hundred and fifty games—and I'll go and have supper.'

I put down my cue and went away.

I sit down at a little table by the door and look to see what he'll do. What d'you think? He walks up and down—thinking I expect that nobody sees him—and pulls so at his hair! Then he walks about again muttering to himself, and suddenly gives another pull!

After that we didn't see him for eight days or so. Then he came in once into the dining-room, looking as gloomy as anything, but didn't go into the billiard-room.

The prince noticed him.

'Come, let's have a game!' he said.

'No,' he says, 'I won't play any more.'

'Oh, nonsense! Come along!'

'No,' he says, 'I won't. It would do you no good for me to come and it would do me harm.'

So he didn't come for another ten days. Then in the holidays he looked in one day in a dress suit—evidently he had been paying calls—and remained for the rest of the day playing all the time; next day he came again, and the day after, and then things went on in the old way. I wanted to play with him again.

'No, I won't play with you,' he says, 'but come to me in a month's time for the hundred and eighty rubles I owe you and you shall have them.'

All right. A month later I went to him.

'On my word,' he says, 'I haven't got it, but come back on Thursday.'

I went on the Thursday. He had such an excellent little flat.

'Is the master at home?' I says.

'Not up yet,' they tell me.

'All right. I'll wait.'

His valet was a serf of his own—an old, grey-haired fellow, simple and not up to any tricks. So we had a talk together.

'What are we living here for?' he says. 'My master is running quite to waste, and we get no honour nor profit in this Petersburg of yours. When we came from the country we thought we'd be as it used to be when the old master—the Kingdom of Heaven be his!—was alive; visiting princes, counts, and generals. We thought we'd get some queenly countess with a dowry, and live like a nobleman; but it turns out that we do nothing but run from one restaurant to another—quite bad! Princess Rtishcheva, you know, is an aunt of ours, and

Prince Borotýnzev is our godfather. What d'you think? He's only been to see them once, at Christmas, and hasn't shown his nose there since. Even their servants laugh at me: "Seems your master doesn't take after his papa!" they say. I once said to him:

"Why don't you go to see your auntie, sir? She is sad at not having seen you so long."

"It's dull there, Demyánych!" he says.

"Just look at that! The only pleasure he's found is at the restaurants. If only he were in public service somewhere—but no, he is only interested in cards and the like, and such doings never lead to any good . . . Eh, eh, we're ruining ourselves—ruining ourselves for nothing! We inherited from our deceased mistress—the Kingdom of Heaven be hers!—a very rich estate: more than a thousand serfs and more than three hundred thousand rubles' worth of forest land. He's mortgaged it all now, sold the forest, ruined the peasants, and nothing comes of it. In the master's absence a steward is more than a master, as is well known. What does the steward care? He skins the peasants completely, and there's an end of it. All he wants is to stuff his own pockets, though they all die of hunger. The other day two peasants came here to complain from the whole commune.

"He's ruined the serfs completely," they said.

"Well, he read the complaints, gave the peasants ten rubles each and said: "I shall come myself soon. As soon as I receive money I'll settle up and leave town."

"But "settle up" indeed, when we keep making debts! Why, we have lived here the winter and have got through some eighty thousand rubles, and now there's not a ruble left in the house! And it's all because of his charitableness. Oh, what a simple

gentleman he is—there are no words for it. It's because of that he is perishing, perishing just for nothing!

And the old man almost wept.

Nekhlyúdob woke up about eleven and called me in.

'They haven't sent me the money, but it is not my fault,' he says. 'Shut the door.'

I shut it.

'Here,' he says, 'take this watch or this diamond pin and pawn it. They'll give you more than a hundred and eighty rubles for it, and when I get the money I will buy them out,' he says.

'All right, sir,' I say. 'If you have no money it can't be helped: let me have the watch—I'll pawn it for you.'

I could see myself that the watch was worth three hundred rubles.

Well, I pawned it for a hundred rubles and brought him the ticket.

'You'll owe me eighty rubles, and you can redeem the watch yourself,' I says.

Those eighty rubles are still owing me to this day!

So he kept coming to us every day again. I don't know what arrangements there were between them but he and the prince always went about together, or they went upstairs with Fedót to play cards. And they had some queer accounts among the three of them! One gave to another, the other to the third, but you could not at all make out who was owing whom.

And he came to us in this way almost every day for two years. Only he had lost his old manner: he became bold, and it got to such a pitch that at times he'd borrow a ruble from me to pay his cab fare; yet he still played with the prince for a hundred rubles a game.

He grew thin, sallow, and gloomy. He'd come in, order a glass of absinthe at once, have a snack, and wash it down with port wine, and then he would seem a bit brighter.

He came one day during Carnival, and began playing with some hussar.

'Do you want to have something on the game?' says the hussar.

'Certainly,' he says. 'How much?'

'Shall it be a bottle of burgundy?'

'All right.'

Well, the hussar won, and they sat down to dinner. They sat down, and Nekhlyúdob says at once:

'Simon, a bottle of Clos Vougeot—and mind it's properly warmed.'

Simon went out and brought some food, but no bottle.

'Well, and the wine?'

Simon ran out and brought the joint.

'Bring the wine,' says Nekhlyúdob.

Simon says nothing.

'Have you gone mad? We're finishing dinner and there's no wine. Who drinks it with the dessert?'

Simon ran out.

'The proprietor would like to see you,' he says.

Nekhlyúdob went quite red and jumped up from the table—

'What does he want?' he says.

The proprietor was standing at the door.

'I can't give you any more credit unless you pay me what you owe.'

'But I told you I'd pay at the beginning of next month!'

'As you please, but I can't go on giving credit and not receiving anything. As it is I lose tens of thousands by bad debts.'

'Oh, come, *mon cher*,' he says, 'surely you can trust me! Send up the bottle, and I will try to pay you as soon as possible.'

And he ran back.

'What did they call you away for?' asked the hussar.

'Just to ask me about something.'

'A little warm wine now would be just the thing,' says the hussar.

'Well, Simon, how about it?'

Poor Simon ran out again. Again there was no wine or anything. It was a bad lookout. Nekhlyúdiv got up from the table and came to me.

'For God's sake, Petrúshka,' he says, 'let me have six rubles.'

He looked beside himself.

'I haven't got it, sir, on my word! As it is you're owing me a lot.'

'I'll give you forty rubles in a week's time for the six!'

'If I had it,' I says, 'I wouldn't dare refuse you, but really I haven't got it.'

And what do you think? He rushed out, clenching his teeth, and ran up and down the corridor like a madman, banging himself on the forehead.

'Oh, my God!' he says. 'What does it mean?'

He didn't even go back to the dining-room, but jumped into a carriage and drove off.

How they laughed! The hussar says:

'Where's the gentleman who was dining with me?'

'Gone,' they say.

'What do you mean—gone? What message did he leave?'

'He didn't leave any message,' they tell him. 'He just got in and drove away.'

'A fine goose!' he says.

'Well,' I think to myself, 'now he won't come for

a long time, after such a disgrace.' But next day towards evening he came again, just the same. He went to the billiard-room with a box of some kind he had brought with him. He took off his overcoat.

'Let's play!' he says, looking from under his brows very cross.

We played a game.

'That's enough,' he says. 'Go and get me a pen and paper. I have to write a letter.'

Thinking nothing and guessing nothing, I brought the paper and put it on the table in the little room.

'It's all ready, sir,' I says.

Well, so he sat down at the table and wrote and wrote something; then he jumped up frowning.

'Go and see if my carriage has come!'

It happened on the Friday in Carnival Week, so none of our gentlemen were there: they had all gone to balls.

I was just going to find out about the carriage, but was hardly out of the door when he cried: 'Petrúshka! Petrúshka!' as if frightened of something.

I came back, and there he stood as white as a sheet, looking at me.

'You were pleased to call me, sir?' I says.

He was silent.

'What is it you want, sir?'

He was still silent.

'Oh, yes! Let's have another game,' he says.

Well, he won the game.

'Have I learnt to play well?' he says.

'Yes,' says I.

'That's it,' he says. 'Now go and find out about my carriage.'

And he paces up and down the room.

Without thinking anything, I went out onto the

orch and saw that there was no carriage there at all, and went back.

As I go back it sounds as if someone had given a knock with a cue.

I go into the billiard-room—there's a strange smell.

I look: and there he lies on the floor covered with blood, with a pistol thrown down beside him. I was so frightened that I could not say a word.

He jerked his leg again and again and stretched himself. Then his throat rattled, and he stretched out like this.

And why such a sinful thing happened to him—I mean, why he ruined his soul—God alone knows: he left nothing but this paper behind, but I can't understand it at all.

Really, what things gentlemen do! . . . Gentlefolk—that's it—gentlefolk!

'God gave me everything man can desire: wealth, a name, intelligence, and noble aspirations. I wanted to enjoy myself and trampled in the mire all that was good in me.

'I am not dishonoured, not unfortunate, have committed no crime; but I have done worse—I have killed my feelings, my reason, my youth.

'I am enmeshed in a dirty net from which I cannot free myself and to which I cannot get used. I continually fall and fall, feel myself falling, and cannot stop.

'It would be easier if I were dishonoured, unfortunate, or a criminal. Then there would be some consolation of gloomy greatness in my despair. If I were dishonoured I could raise myself above the perception of honour held in our society and could despise it.

'If I were unfortunate I could complain. If I had



committed a crime I might redeem it by repentance or by suffering punishment: but I am merely base, nasty—I know it and cannot raise myself.

‘And what has ruined me? Had I some strong passion which could be my excuse? No.

‘Sevens, aces, champagne, the yellow in the middle pocket, grey or rainbow-coloured currency notes, cigarettes, women who could be bought—those are my recollections!

‘One terrible moment when I forgot myself, a humiliation I shall never wipe out, has made me recollect myself. I was horrified when I saw what an immeasurable gulf separates me from what I wished to be and might have been. In my imagination the dreams and thoughts of my youth reappeared.

‘Where are those bright thoughts of life, of eternity, of God, which filled my soul so clearly and powerfully? Where is that force of love—not confined to any person—that filled my soul with such joyful warmth? Where is my hope of development, my sympathy with all that is excellent, my love of my relations, neighbours, work, and fame? Where is my sense of duty?

‘I was insulted—and challenged the man to a duel and thought I had fully satisfied the demands of honour. I needed money to satisfy my vices and vanity, and I ruined a thousand families entrusted to me by God and did it without shame—I who so well understood those sacred obligations. A dishonourable man told me that I had no conscience and that I wished to steal—and I remained friends with him because he was a dishonourable man and told me that he had not meant to offend me. I was told that it was ridiculous to be chaste and I abandoned without regret the flower of my soul—my innocence—to a purchasable woman.

'And how good and happy I might have been had I trodden the path which on entering life my fresh mind and my childlike, genuine feeling indicated to me! More than once I tried to escape from the rut in which my life was moving and get back to that bright path. I told myself: I will use all the will I have—but I could not. When I remained alone I felt awkward and afraid of myself. When I was with others I no longer heard the inner voice at all, and sank lower and lower.

'At last I reached the terrible conviction that I could not rise, and left off thinking of doing so and tried to forget myself; but hopeless remorse tormented me still more. Then the idea—terrible to others but comforting to me—of suicide first occurred to me. But in that respect also I was mean and base. Only yesterday's stupid affair with the hussar gave me sufficient resolution to carry out my intention. Nothing honourable remained in me—only vanity, and out of vanity I am doing the one good action of my life. I formerly thought that the proximity of death would uplift my soul. I was mistaken. In a quarter of an hour I shall be no more, yet my views have not changed at all. I still see, still hear, still think, in the same way. There is the same strange inconsistency, inconsequence, vacillation, and levity in my thoughts—so contrary to the unity and clarity that man is—God knows why—able to conceive of. Thoughts of what will be beyond the tomb and of what will be said to-morrow about my death at Aunt Rfshcheva's present themselves to me with equal force.'



# THE SNOW STORM



# THE SNOW STORM

## A SHORT STORY

### I

**H**AVING drunk tea towards seven o'clock in the evening, I left a station, the name of which I have forgotten, though I know it was somewhere in the district of the Don Cossack Army near Noco-cherkássk. It was already dark when, having wrapped myself in my fur coat, I took my seat under the apron beside Aleshka in the sledge. Near the post-station it seemed mild and calm. Though no snow was falling, not a star was visible overhead and the sky looked extremely low and black, in contrast to the clean snowy plain spread out before us.

We had hardly passed the dark shapes of the windmills, one of which clumsily turned its large sails, and left the settlement behind us, when I noticed that the road had become heavier and deeper in snow, that the wind blew more fiercely on the left, tossing the horses' tails and manes sideways, and that it kept carrying away the snow stirred up by the hoofs and sledge-runners. The sound of the bell began to die down, and through some opening in my sleeve a stream of cold air forced its way behind my back, and I recalled the station-master's advice, not to start for fear of going astray all night and being frozen on the road.

'Shan't we be losing our way?' I said to the driver, and not receiving an answer I put my question more definitely: 'I say, driver, do you think we shall reach the next station without losing our way?'

'God only knows,' he answered without turning his head. 'Just see how the snow drifts along the ground! Nothing of the road to be seen. O Lord!'

'Yes, but you'd better tell me whether you expect to get me to the next station or not?' I insisted. 'Shall we get there?'

'We ought to manage it,' said the driver, and went on to add something the wind prevented my hearing.

I did not feel inclined to turn back, but the idea of straying about all night in the frost and snow-storm on the perfectly bare steppe which made up that part of the Don Army district was also far from pleasant. Moreover, though I could not see my driver very well in the dark, I did not much like the look of him and he did not inspire me with confidence. He sat exactly in the middle of his seat with his legs in, instead of to one side; he was too big, he spoke lazily, his cap, not like those usually worn by drivers, was too big and flopped from side to side; besides, he did not urge the horses on properly, but held the reins in both hands, like a footman who had taken the coachman's place on the box. But my chief reason for not believing in him was because he had a kerchief tied over his ears. In a word he did not please me, and that solemn stooping back of his looming in front of me seemed to bode no good.

'In my opinion we'd better turn back,' remarked Alëshka. 'There's no sense in getting lost!'

'O Lord! Just look how the snow is driving, nothing of the road to be seen, and it's closing my eyes right up . . . O Lord!' muttered the driver.

We had not been going a quarter of an hour before the driver handed the reins to Alëshka, clumsily liberated his legs, and making the snow crunch with his big boots went to look for the track.

'What is it? Where are you going? Are we off the road?' I asked. But the driver did not answer and, turning his face away from the wind which was

Beating into his eyes, walked away from the edge.

'Well, is there a road?' I asked when he returned.

'No, there's nothing,' he answered with sudden impatience and irritation, as if I were to blame that he had strayed off the track, and having slowly thrust his big legs again into the front of the sledge he began arranging the reins with his frozen gloves.

'What are we to do?' I asked when we had started again.

'What are we to do? We'll drive where God sends us.'

And though we were quite evidently not following a road, we went on at the same slow trot, now through dry snow five inches deep, and now over brittle crusts of frozen snow.

Though it was cold, the snow on my fur collar melted very quickly; the drift along the ground grew worse and worse, and a few dry flakes began to fall from above.

It was plain that we were going heaven knows where, for having driven for another quarter of an hour we had not seen a single verst-post.

'Well, what do you think?' I asked the driver again. 'Shall we get to the station?'

'What station? We shall get back, if we give the horses their head they will take us there, but hardly to the next station—we might just perish.'

'Well then, let us go back,' I said. 'And really...'

'Then I am to turn back?' said the driver.

'Yes, yes, turn back!'

The driver gave the horses the reins. They began to run faster, and though I did not notice that we were turning, I felt the wind blowing from a different quarter, and we soon saw the windmills appearing through the snow. The driver cheered up and began to talk.



"The other day the return sledges from the other station spent the whole night in a snow storm among haystacks and did not get in till the morning. Lucky that they got among those stacks, else they'd have all been frozen, it was so cold. As it is one of them had his feet frozen, and was at death's door for three weeks with them."

"But it's not cold now, and it seems calmer," I said, "we might perhaps go on?"

"It's warm enough, that's true, but the snow is drifting. Now that we have it at our back it seems easier, but the snow is driving strongly. I might go if it were on courier-duty or something of the kind, but not of my own free will. It's no joke if a passenger gets frozen. How am I to answer for your honour afterwards?"

## II

Just then we heard behind us the bells of several *tróykas*<sup>1</sup> which were rapidly overtaking us.

"It's the courier's bell," said my driver. "There's no other like it in the district."

And in fact the bell of the front *tróyka*, the sound of which was already clearly borne to us by the wind, was exceedingly fine: clear, sonorous, deep, and slightly quivering. As I learnt afterwards it had been chosen by men who made a hobby of *tróyka* bells. There were three bells—a large one in the middle with what is called a *crimson* tone, and two small ones tuned to a third and a fifth. The ringing of that third and of the quivering fifth echoing in the air was extraordinarily effective and strangely beautiful in that silent and deserted steppe.

"The post is going," said my driver, when the first of the three *tróykas* overtook us. "How is the

<sup>1</sup> A *troyka* is a three-horse sledge, or, more correctly, a team of three horses.

ad? Is it usable?" he called out to the driver of the last sledge, but the man only shouted at his horses and did not reply.

The sound of the bells was quickly lost in the wind as soon as the post sledges had passed us.

I suppose my driver felt ashamed.

'Well, let us try it again, sir!' he said to me. Others have made their way through and their tracks will be fresh.'

I agreed, and we turned again, facing the wind and struggling forward through the deep snow. I kept my eyes on the side of the road so as not to lose the track left by the tróykas. For some two versts the track was plainly visible, then only a light unevenness where the runners had gone, and soon I was quite unable to tell whether it was a track or only a layer of driven snow. My eyes were blinded by looking at the snow monotonously receding under the runners, and I began to look ahead. We saw the third verst-post, but were quite unable to find a fourth. As before we drove against the wind, and with the wind, and to the right and to the left, and at last we came to such a pass that the driver said we must have turned off to the right, I said we had gone to the left, and Alëshka was sure we had turned right back. Again we stopped several times and the driver disengaged his big feet and climbed out to look for the road, but all in vain. I too once went to see whether something I caught a glimpse of was not the road, but hardly had I taken some six steps with difficulty against the wind before I became convinced that similar layers of snow lay everywhere, and that I had seen the road only in my imagination. When I could no longer see the sledge I cried out: 'Driver! Alëshka!' but I felt how the wind caught my voice straight from my mouth and bore it

instantly to a distance. I went to where the sledge had been—but it was not there; I went to the right, it was not there either. I am ashamed to remember in what a loud, piercing, and even rather despairing voice I again shouted 'Driver!' and there he was within two steps of me. His black figure with the little whip and enormous cap pushed to one side, suddenly loomed up before me. He led me to the sledge.

'Thank the Lord, it's still warm,' he said, 'if the frost seized us it would be terrible . . . O Lord!'

'Give the horses their head: let them take us back,' I said, having seated myself in the sledge. 'They will take us back, driver, eh?'

'They ought to.'

He let go of the reins, struck the harness-pad of the middle horse with the whip, and we again moved on somewhere. We had travelled on for about half an hour when suddenly ahead of us we recognized the connoisseur's bell and the other two, but this time they were coming towards us. There were the same three tróykas, which having delivered the mail were now returning to the station with relay horses attached. The courier's tróyka with its big horses and musical bells ran quickly in front, with one driver on the driver's seat shouting vigorously. Two drivers were sitting in the middle of each of the empty sledges that followed, and one could hear their loud and merry voices. One of them was smoking a pipe, and the spark that flared up in the wind showed part of his face.

Looking at them I felt ashamed that I had been afraid to go on, and my driver probably shared the same feeling, for we both said at once: 'Let us follow them!'

## III

My driver, before the third tróyka had passed, began turning so clumsily that his shafts hit the horses attached behind it. They all three shied, broke their strap, and galloped aside.

'You cross-eyed devil! Can't you see when you're turning into someone, you devil?' one of the drivers seated in the last sledge—a short old man, as far as I could judge by his voice and figure—began to curse in hoarse, quivering tones, and quickly jumping out of the sledge he ran after the horses, still continuing his coarse and harsh abuse of my driver.

But the horses did not stop. The driver followed them, and in a moment both he and they were lost in the white mist of driving snow.

'Vas't-i-li! Bring along the dun horse! I can't catch them without,' came his voice.

One of the other drivers, a very tall man, got out of his sledge, silently unfastened his three horses, climbed on one of them by its breeching, and disappeared at a clumsy gallop in the direction of the first driver.

We and the other two tróykas started after the courier's tróyka, which with its bell ringing went along at full trot though there was no road.

'Catch them! Not likely!' said my driver of the one who had run after the horses. 'If a horse won't come to other horses, that shows it's bewitched and will take you somewhere you'll never return from.'

From the time he began following the others my driver seemed more cheerful and talkative, a fact of which I naturally took advantage, as I did not yet feel sleepy. I began asking where he came from, and why, and who he was, and it turned out that like myself he was from Túla province, a serf from

Kirpíchnoe village, that they were short of land there and had had bad harvests since the cholera year. He was one of two brothers in the family, the third having gone as a soldier; that they had not enough grain to last till Christmas, and had to live on outside earnings. His youngest brother was head of the house, being married, while he himself was a widower. An *artél*<sup>1</sup> of drivers came from their village to these parts every year. Though he had not driven before, he had taken the job to help his brother, and lived, thank God, quite well, earning a hundred and twenty assignation rubles a year, of which he sent a hundred home to the family; and that life would be quite good 'if only the couriers were not such beasts, and the people hereabouts not so abusive'.

'Now why did that driver scold me so? O Lord! Did I set his horses loose on purpose? Do I mean harm to anybody? And why did he go galloping after them? They'd have come back of themselves, and now he'll only tire out the horses and get lost himself,' said the God-fearing peasant.

'And what is that black thing there?' I asked, noticing several dark objects in front of us.

'Why, a train of carts. That's pleasant driving!' he went on, when we had come abreast of the huge mat-covered wagons on wheels, following one another. 'Look, you can't see a single soul—they're all asleep. Wise horses know of themselves . . . you can't make them miss the way anyhow . . . We've driven that way on contract work ourselves,' he added, 'so we know.'

It really was strange to see those huge wagons covered with snow from their matted tops to their

<sup>1</sup> An *artél* was a voluntary association of workers, which had a manager, contracted as a unit, and divided its earnings among its members.

ry wheels, and moving along all alone. Only in the front corner of the wagon did the matting, covered two inches thick with snow, lift a bit and a glimpse appear for a moment from under it as our bells tinkled past. The large piebald horse, stretching its neck and straining its back, went evenly along the completely snow-hidden road, monotonously shaking its shaggy head under the whitened harness-bow, and pricking one snow-covered ear when we overlooked it.

When we had gone on for another half-hour the driver again turned to me.

'What d'you think, sir, are we going right?'

'I don't know,' I answered.

'At first the wind came that way, and now we are going right under the wind. No, we are not going where we ought, we are going astray again,' he said quite calmly.

One saw that, though he was inclined to be a coward, yet 'death itself is pleasant in company' as the saying is, and he had become quite tranquil now that there were several of us and he no longer had to lead and be responsible. He made remarks on the blunders of the driver in front with the greatest coolness, as if it were none of his business. And in fact I noticed that we sometimes saw the front tróyka on the left and sometimes on the right; it even seemed to me that we were going round in a very small circle. However, that might be an optical illusion, like the impression that the leading tróyka was sometimes going uphill, and then along a slope, or downhill, whereas I knew that the steppe was perfectly level.

After we had gone on again for some time, I saw a long way off, on the very horizon as it seemed to me, a long, dark, moving stripe; and a moment later it became clear that it was the same train of

wagons we had passed before. The snow was still covering their creaking wheels, some of which did not even turn any longer, the men were still asleep as before under the matting, and the piebald horse in front blew out its nostrils as before, sniffed at the road, and pricked its ears.

'There, we've turned and turned and come back to the same wagons!' exclaimed my driver in a dissatisfied voice. 'The courier's horses are good ones, that's why he's driving them so recklessly, but ours will stop altogether if we go on like this all night.'

He cleared his throat.

'Let us turn back, sir, before we get into trouble!'

'No! Why? We shall get somewhere.'

'Where shall we get to? We shall spend the night in the steppe. How it is blowing! . . . O Lord!'

Though I was surprised that the driver of the front *tróyka*, having evidently lost the road and the direction, went on at a fast trot without looking for the road, and cheerfully shouting, I did not want to lag behind them.

'Follow them!' I said.

My driver obeyed, whipping up his horses more reluctantly than before, and did not turn to talk to me any more.

#### IV

THE storm grew more and more violent, and the snow fell dry and fine. I thought it was beginning to freeze: my cheeks and nose felt colder than before, and streams of cold air made their way more frequently under my fur coat, so that I had to wrap it closer around me. Sometimes the sledge bumped on the bare ice-glazed ground from which the wind had swept the snow. As I had already travelled more than five hundred versts without stopping anywhere for the night, I involuntarily kept closing

my eyes and dozing off, although I was much interested to know how our wandering would end. Once when I opened my eyes I was struck for a moment by what seemed to me a bright light falling on the white plain; the horizon had widened considerably, the lowering black sky had suddenly vanished, and on all sides slanting white streaks of falling snow could be seen. The outlines of the front tróykas were more distinct, and as I looked up it seemed for a minute as though the clouds had dispersed, and that only the falling snow veiled the sky. While I was dozing the moon had risen and was casting its cold bright light through the tenuous clouds and the falling snow. The only things I saw clearly were my sledge, the horses, my driver, and the three tróykas in front of us: the courier's sledge in which a driver still sat, as before, driving at a fast trot; the second, in which two drivers having laid down the reins and made a shelter for themselves out of a coat sat smoking their pipes all the time, as could be seen by the sparks that flew from them; and the third in which no one was visible, as probably the driver was lying asleep in the body of the sledge. The driver of the first tróyka, however, at the time I awoke, occasionally stopped his horses and sought for the road. As soon as we stopped the howling of the wind sounded louder and the vast quantity of snow borne through the air became more apparent. In the snow-shrouded moonlight I could see the driver's short figure probing the snow in front of him with the handle of his whip, moving backwards and forwards in the white dimness, again returning to his sledge and jumping sideways onto his seat, and again amid the monotonous whistling of the wind I heard his dexterous, resonant cries urging on the horses, and the ringing of the bells. Whenever the driver of the



front tróyka got out to search for some sign of a road or haystacks, there came from the second tróyka the bold, self-confident voice of one of the drivers shouting to him:

'Hey, Ignáshka, you've borne quite to the left! Bear to the right, facing the wind!' Or: 'What are you twisting about for, quite uselessly? Follow the snow, see how the drifts lie, and we'll come out just right.' Or: 'Take to the right, to the right, mate! See, there's something black—it must be a post.' Or: 'What are you straying about for? Unhitch the piebald and let him run in front, he'll lead you right out onto the road. That would be better.'

But the man who was giving this advice not only did not unhitch one of his own side-horses or get out to look for the road, but did not show his nose from under his sheltering coat, and when Ignáshka, the leader, shouted in reply to one of his counsels that he should take on the lead himself if he knew which way to go, the advice-giver replied that if he were driving the courier's tróyka he would take the lead and take us right onto the road. 'But our horses won't take the lead in a snow-storm!' he shouted—'they're not that kind of horses!'

'Then don't bother me!' Ignáshka replied, whistling cheerfully to his horses.

The other driver in the second sledge did not speak to Ignáshka at all, and in general took no part in the matter, though he was not asleep, as I concluded from his pipe being always alight, and because, whenever we stopped, I heard the even and continuous sound of his voice. He was telling a folk tale. Only once, when Ignáshka stopped for the sixth or seventh time, he apparently grew vexed at being interrupted during the pleasure of his drive, and shouted to him:

'Hullo, why have you stopped again? Just look,

he wants to find the road! He's been told there's a snow storm! The surveyor himself couldn't find the road now. You should drive on as long as the horses will go, and then maybe we shan't freeze to death . . . Go on, do!

'I daresay! Didn't a postillion freeze to death last year?' my driver remarked.

The driver of the third sledge did not wake up all the time. Once when we had stopped the advice-giver shouted:

'Philip! Hullo, Philip!' and receiving no reply remarked: 'Hasn't he frozen, perhaps? . . . Go and have a look, Ignáshka.'

Ignáshka, who found time for everything, walked up to the sledge and began to shake the sleeping man.

'Just see what half a bottle of vódka has done! Talk about freezing!' he said, shaking him.

The sleeper grunted something and cursed.

'He's alive, all right,' said Ignáshka, and ran forward again. We drove on, and so fast that the little off-side sorrel of my tróyka, which my driver continually touched with the whip near his tail, now and then broke into an awkward little gallop.

## V

It was I think already near midnight when the little old man and Vasili, who had gone after the runaway horses, rode up to us. They had managed to catch the horses and to find and overtake us; but how they had managed to do this in the thick blinding snow storm amid the bare steppe will always remain a mystery to me. The old man, swinging his elbows and legs, was riding the shaft-horse at a trot (the two side-horses were attached to its collar: one dare not let horses loose in a snow

storm). When he came abreast of us he again began to scold my driver.

'Look at the cross-eyed devil, really . . .

'Eh, Uncle Mítrich!' the folk-tale teller in the second sledge called out: 'Are you alive? Get in here with us.'

But the old man did not reply and continued his abuse. When he thought he had said enough he rode up to the second sledge.

'Have you caught them all?' someone in it asked.

'What do you think?'

His small figure threw itself forward on the back of the trotting horse, then jumped down on the snow, and without stopping he ran after the sledge and tumbled in, his legs sticking out over its side. The tall Vasíli silently took his old place in the front sledge beside Ignáshka, and the two began to look for the road together.

'How the old man nags . . . Lord God!' muttered my driver.

For a long time after that we drove on without stopping over the white waste, in the cold, pellucid, and quivering light of the snow storm. I would open my eyes and the same clumsy snow-covered cap and back would be jolting before me: the same low shaft-bow, under which, between the taut leather reins and always at the same distance from me, the head of our shaft-horse kept bobbing with its black mane blown to one side by the wind. Looking across its back I could see the same little piebald off-horse on the right, with its tail tied up short, and the swingletree which sometimes knocked against the front of the sledge. I would look down—there was the same scurrying snow through which our runners were cutting, and which the wind resolutely bore away to one side. In front, always at the same distance away, glided the first *tróvka*.

le to right and left everything glimmered white dim. Vainly did my eye look for any new object: neither post, nor haystack, nor fence was to be seen. Everywhere all was white and fluctuating: now the horizon seemed immeasurably distant, now it closed in on all sides to within two paces of me; suddenly a high white wall would seem to rise up on the right and run beside the sledge, then it would suddenly vanish and rise again in front, only to glide on farther and farther away and again disappear. When I looked up it would seem lighter for a moment, as if I might see the stars through the haze, but the stars would run away higher and higher from my sight and only the snow would be visible, falling past my eyes onto my face and the collar of my fur cloak. The sky everywhere remained equally light, equally white, monotonous, colourless, and constantly shifting. The wind seemed to be changing: now it blew in my face and the snow plastered my eyes, now it blew from one side and annoyingly tossed the fur-collar of my cloak against my head and mockingly flapped my face with it; now it howled through some opening. I heard the soft incessant crunching of the hoofs and the runners on the snow, and the clang of the bells dying down when we drove through deep drifts. Only now and then, when we drove against the snow and glided over bare frozen ground, did Ignáshka's energetic whistling and the sonorous sound of the bell with its accompanying bare fifth reach me, and give sudden relief to the dismal character of the desert; and then again the bells would sound monotonous, playing always with insufferable precision the same tune, which I involuntarily imagined I was hearing. One of my feet began to feel the frost, and when I turned to wrap myself up better, the snow that had settled on my collar and

cap sifted down my neck and made me shiver, but on the whole I still felt warm in my fur cloak, and drowsiness overcame me

## VI

RECOLLECTIONS and pictures of the distant past superseded one another with increasing rapidity in my imagination.

'That advice-giver who is always calling out from the second sledge -- what sort of fellow can he be?' I thought. 'Probably red-haired, thick-set, and with short legs, like Theodore Filpych, our old butler.' And I saw the staircase of our big house and five domestic serfs with heavy steps bringing a piano from the wing on slings made of towels, and Theodore Filpych with the sleeves of his nankeen coat turned up, holding one of the pedals, running forward, lifting a latch, pulling here at the slings, pushing there, crawling between people's legs, getting into everybody's way, and shouting incessantly in an anxious voice:

'Lean it against yourselves, you there in front you in front! That's the way -- the tail end up, up, up! Turn into the door! That's the way.'

'Just let us do it, Theodore Filpych! We can manage it alone,' timidly remarks the gardener, pressed against the bannisters quite red with straining, and with great effort holding up one corner of the grand piano.

But Theodore Filpych will not be quiet.

'What does it mean?' I reflect. 'Does he think he is useful or necessary for the work in hand, or is he simply glad God has given him this self-confident persuasive eloquence, and enjoys dispensing it? That must be it.' And then somehow I see the lake, and tired domestic serfs up to their knees in the water dragging a fishing-net, and again Theodore

Psych with a watering-pot, shouting at everybody. He runs up and down on the bank, now and then approaching the brink to empty out some turbid water and to take up fresh, while holding back the golden carp with his hand. But now it is a July noon. I am going somewhere over the freshly mown grass in the garden, under the burning, vertical rays of the sun; I am still very young, and I feel a lack of something and a desire to fill that lack. I go to my favourite place by the lake, between the briar-rose bed and the birch avenue, and lie down to sleep. I remember the feeling with which, lying down, I looked across between the prickly red stems of the rose trees at the dark, dry, crumbly earth, and at the bright blue mirror of the lake. It is a feeling of naive self-satisfaction and melancholy. Everything around me is beautiful, and that beauty affects me so powerfully that it seems to me that I myself am good, and the one thing that vexes me is that nobody is there to admire me. It is hot. I try to sleep so as to console myself, but the flies, the unendurable flies, give me no peace here either: they gather round me and, with a kind of dull persistence, hard as cherry-stones, jump from my forehead onto my hands. A bee buzzes not far from me in the blazing sunlight; yellow-winged butterflies fly from one blade of grass to another as if exhausted by the heat. I look up: it hurts my eyes—the sun glitters too brightly through the light foliage of the curly birch tree whose branches sway softly high above me, and it seems hotter than ever. I cover my face with my handkerchief: it feels stifling, and the flies seem to stick to my hands which begin to perspire. In the very centre of the wild rose bush sparrows begin to bustle about. One of them hops to the ground about two feet from me, energetically pretends to peck at the ground a

couple of times, flies back into the bush, rustling the twigs, and chirping merrily flies away. Another also hops down, jerks his little tail, looks about him, chirps, and flies off quick as an arrow after the first one. From the lake comes a sound of beetles<sup>1</sup> beating the wet linen, and the sound re-echoes and is borne down along the lake. Sounds of laughter and the voices and splashing of bathers are heard. A gust of wind rustles the crowns of the birch trees, still far from me, now it comes nearer and I hear it stir the grass, and now the leaves of the wild roses begin to flutter, pressed against their stems, and at last a fresh stream of air reaches me, lifting a corner of my handkerchief and tickling my moist face. Through the gap where the corner of the kerchief was lifted a fly comes in and flutters with fright close to my moist mouth. A dry twig presses against my back. No, I can't lie still: I had better go and have a bathe. But just then, close to the rose bush, I hear hurried steps and a woman's frightened voice:

'O God! How could such a thing happen! And none of the men are here!'

'What is it? What is it?' running out into the sunshine I ask a woman serf who hurries past me groaning. She only looks round, waves her arms, and runs on. But here comes seventy-year-old Matrëna hurrying to the lake, holding down with one hand the kerchief which is slipping off her head, and hopping and dragging one of her feet in its worsted stocking. Two little girls come running up hand in hand, and a ten-year-old boy, wearing his father's coat and clutching the homespun skirt of one of the girls, keeps close behind them.

'What has happened?' I ask them.

'A peasant is drowning.'

<sup>1</sup> The women take their clothes to rinse in lakes or streams, where they beat them with wooden beetles.

'Where?'

'In the lake.'

'Who is he? One of ours?'

'No, a stranger.'

Iván the coachman, dragging his heavy boots through the newly-mown grass, and the fat clerk Jacob, all out of breath, run to the pond and I after them.

I remember the feeling which said to me: 'There you are, plunge in and pull out the peasant and save him, and everyone will admire you,' which was exactly what I wanted.

'Where is he? Where?' I ask the throng of domestic serfs gathered on the bank.

'Out there, in the very deepest part near the other bank, almost at the boathouse,' says the washerwoman, hanging the wet linen on her wooden yoke. 'I look, and see him dive; he just comes up and is gone, then comes up again and calls out: "I'm drowning, help!" and goes down again, and nothing but bubbles come up. Then I see that the man is drowning, so I give a yell: "Folk! A peasant's drowning!"'

And lifting the yoke to her shoulder the laundress waddles sideways along the path away from the lake.

'Oh gracious, what a business!' says Jacob Ivanov, the office clerk, in a despairing tone. 'What a bother there'll be with the rural court. We'll never get through with it!'

A peasant carrying a scythe pushes his way through the throng of women, children, and old men who have gathered on the farther shore, and hanging his scythe on the branch of a willow slowly begins to take off his boots.

'Where? Where did he go down?' I keep asking, wishing to rush there and do something extraordinary.



But they point to the smooth surface of the lake which is occasionally rippled by the passing breeze. I do not understand how he came to drown; the water is just as smooth, lovely, and calm above him, shining golden in the midday sun, and it seems that I can do nothing and can astonish no one, especially as I am a very poor swimmer and the peasant is already pulling his shirt over his head and ready to plunge in. Everybody looks at him hopefully and with bated breath, but after going in up to his shoulders he slowly turns back and puts his shirt on again—he cannot swim.

People still come running and the thing grows and grows; the women cling to one another, but nobody does anything to help. Those who have just come give advice, and sigh, and their faces express fear and despair; but of those who have been there awhile, some, tired with standing, sit down on the grass, while some go away. Old Matrena asks her daughter whether she shut the oven door, and the boy who is wearing his father's coat diligently throws small stones into the water.

But now Theodore Filípych's dog Tresórka, barking and looking back in perplexity, comes running down the hill, and then Theodore himself, running downhill and shouting, appears from behind the briar-rose bushes:

'What are you standing there for?' he cries, taking off his coat as he runs, 'A man drowning, and they stand there! . . . Get me a rope!'

Everybody looks at Theodore Filípych with hope and fear as, leaning his hand on the shoulder of an obliging domestic serf, he prizes off his right boot with the toe of the left.

'Over there, where the people are, a little to the right of the willow, Theodore Filípych, just there!' someone says to him.

'I know,' he replies, and knitting his brows, in response, no doubt, to the signs of shame among the crowd of women, he pulls off his shirt, removes the cross from his neck and hands it to the gardener's boy who stands obsequiously before him, and then, stepping energetically over the cut grass, approaches the lake.

Tresórka, perplexed by the quickness of his master's movements, has stopped near the crowd and with a smack of his lips eats a few blades of grass near the bank, then looks at his master intently and with a joyful yelp suddenly plunges with him into the water. For a moment nothing can be seen but foam and spray, which even reaches to us; but now Theodore Filípych, gracefully swinging his arms and rhythmically raising and lowering his back, swims briskly with long strokes to the opposite shore. Tresórka, having swallowed some water, returns hurriedly, shakes himself near the throng, and rubs his back on the grass. Just as Theodore Filípych reaches the opposite shore two coachmen come running up to the willow with a fishing-net wrapped round a pole. Theodore Filípych for some unknown reason lifts his arms, dives down once and then a second and a third time, on each occasion squirting a jet of water from his mouth, and gracefully tosses back his hair without answering the questions that are hurled at him from all sides. At last he comes out onto the bank, and as far as I can see only gives instructions as to spreading out the net. The net is drawn in, but there is nothing in it except ooze with a few small carp entangled in it. While the net is being lowered again I go round to that side.

The only sounds to be heard are Theodore Filípych's voice giving orders, the plashing of the wet rope on the water, and sighs of terror. The wet

rope attached to the right side of the net, more and more covered by grass, comes farther and farther out of the water.

'Now then, pull together, harder, all together!' shouts Theodore Filipyeh

The floats appear dripping with water.

'There is something coming, mates. It pulls heavy!' someone calls out.

Now the net—in which two or three little carp are struggling—is dragged to the bank, wetting and pressing down the grass. And in the extended wings of the net, through a thin swaying layer of turbid water, something white comes in sight. Amid dead silence an impressive, though not loud, gasp of horror passes through the crowd.

'Pull harder, onto the land!' comes Theodore Filipyeh's resolute voice, and the drowned body is dragged out to the willow over the stubble of burdock and thistle.

And now I see my good old aunt in her silk dress, with her face ready to burst into tears. I see her lilac sunshade with its hinge, which seems somehow incongruous in this scene of death, so terrible in its simplicity. I recall the disappointment her face expressed because arnica could be of no use, and I also recall the painful feeling of annoyance I experienced when, with the naive egotism of love, she said: 'Come away my dear. Oh, how dreadful it is! And you always go bathing and swimming by yourself.'

I remember how bright and hot the sun was as it baked the powdery earth underfoot; how it sparkled and mirrored in the lake; how the plump carp plashed near the banks and shoals of little fish rippled the water in the middle; how a hawk hovering high in the air circled over the ducklings, which quacking and splashing had come swimming out

rough the reeds into the middle of the lake; howling white thunder-clouds gathered on the horizon; how the mud drawn out onto the bank by the net gradually receded; and how as I crossed the ice I again heard the blows of the beetles resounding over the lake.

But that beetle sounds as if two beetles were eating together in thirds, and that sound torments and worries me, the more so because I know that this beetle is a bell, and that Theodore Filispych will not make it stop. Then that beetle, like an instrument of torture, presses my foot which is freezing, and I fall asleep.

I am awakened, as it seems to me, by our galloping very fast and by two voices calling out quite close to me:

'I say, Ignát! Eh, Ignát!' my driver is saying. 'You take my passenger. You have to go on anyhow, but what's the use of my goading my horses uselessly? You take him!'

Ignát's voice quite close to me replies:

'Where's the pleasure of making myself responsible for the passenger? . . . Will you stand me a bottle?'

'Oh, come, a bottle . . . say half a bottle.'

'Half a bottle, indeed!' shouts another voice. 'Wear out the horses for half a bottle!'

I open my eyes. Before them still flickers the same intolerable swaying snow, the same drivers and horses, but now we are abreast of another sledge. My driver has overtaken Ignát, and we drive side by side for some time. Though the voice from the other sledge advises him not to accept less than a bottle, Ignát suddenly reins in his tróyka.

'Well, shift over. So be it! It's your luck. You'll stand half a bottle when we return to-morrow. Is there much luggage?'

## THE SNOW STORM

My driver jumps out into the snow with unusual acridity for him, bows to me, and begs me to change over into Ignát's sledge. I am quite willing to, but evidently the God-fearing peasant is so pleased that he has to pour out his gratitude and delight to someone. He bows and thanks me, Aleshka, and Ignát.

'There now, the Lord be praised! What was it like . . . O Lord! We have been driving half the night and don't know where we are going. He'll get you there, dear sir, but my horses are quite worn out.'

And he shifts my things with increased zeal.

While my things were being transferred I went with the wind, which almost lifted me off my feet, to the second sledge. That sledge, especially outside the coat which had been arranged over the two men's heads to shelter them from the wind, was more than six inches deep in snow, but behind the coat it was quiet and comfortable. The old man still lay with his legs sticking out, and the storyteller was still going on with his tale:

'Well, when the general comes to Mary in prison, in the King's name, you know, Mary at once says to him: "General, I don't need you and can't love you, and so, you see, you are not my lover, but my lover is the prince himself . . ."'

'And just then . . .' he went on, but seeing me he stopped for a moment and began filling his pipe.

'Well, sir, have you come to listen to the tale?' asked the other whom I called the advice-giver.

'Yes, you're well off here, quite jolly,' I said.

'Why not? It whiles away the time, anyhow it keeps one from thinking.'

'And do you know where we are now?'

This question did not seem to please the drivers.

'Who can make out where we are? Maybe we've

iven into the Kulmýk country,' answered the advice-giver.

'Then what are we going to do?' I asked.

'What can we do? We'll go on, and maybe we'll get somewhere,' he said in a dissatisfied tone.

'But suppose we don't get anywhere, and the horses stick in the snow—what then?'

'What then? Why, nothing.'

'But we might freeze.'

'Of course we might, because one can't even see any haystacks: we have got right among the Kulmýks. The chief thing is to watch the snow.'

'And you seem afraid of getting frozen, sir,' remarked the old man in a shaky voice.

Though he seemed to be chaffing me, it was evident that he was chilled to his very bones.

'Yes, it is getting very cold,' I said.

'Eh, sir, you should do as I do, take a run now and then, that will warm you up.'

'Yes, the chief thing is to have a run behind the sledge,' said the advice-giver.

## VII

'We'RE ready, your honour!' shouted Alëshka from the front sledge.

The storm was so violent that, though I bent almost double and clutched the skirts of my cloak with both hands, I was hardly able to walk the few steps that separated me from the sledge, over the drifting snow which the wind swept from under my feet. My former driver was already kneeling in the middle of his empty sledge, but when he saw me going he took off his big cap (whereupon the wind lifted his hair furiously) and asked for a tip. Evidently he did not expect me to give him one, for my refusal did not grieve him in the least. He

thanked me anyway, put his cap on again, and said: 'God keep you, sir . . .' and jerking his reins and clicking his tongue, turned away from us. Then Ignát swayed his whole back and shouted to the horses, and the sound of the snow crunching under their hoofs, the cries, and the bells, replaced the howling of the wind which had been peculiarly noticeable while we stood still.

For a quarter of an hour after my transfer I kept awake and amused myself watching my new driver and his horses. Ignát sat like a mettlesome fellow, continually rising in his seat, flourishing over the horses the arm from which his whip was hung, shouting, beating one foot against the other, and bending forward to adjust the breeching of the shaft-horse, which kept slipping to the right. He was not tall, but seemed to be well built. Over his sheepskin he wore a large, loose cloak without a girdle, the collar of which was turned down so that his neck was bare. He wore not felt but leather boots, and a small cap which he kept taking off and putting straight. His ears were only protected by his hair. In all his movements one was aware not only of energy, but even more, as it seemed to me, of a desire to arouse that energy in himself. And the farther we went the more often he straightened himself out, rose in his seat, beat his feet together, and addressed himself to Aléshka and me. It seemed to me that he was afraid of losing courage. And there was good reason for it: though the horses were good the road grew heavier and heavier at every step, and it was plain that they were running less willingly: it was already necessary to touch them up with the whip, and the shaft-horse, a good, big, shaggy animal, stumbled more than once, though immediately, as if frightened, it jerked forward again and tossed its shaggy head almost as high as

the bell hanging from the bow above it. The right horse, which I could not help watching, with a long leather tassel to its breeching which shook and raked on its off side, noticeably let its traces slacken and required the whip, but from habit as a good and even mettlesome horse seemed vexed at its own weakness, and angrily lowered and tossed its head at the reins. It was terrible to realize that the snow storm and the frost were increasing, the horses growing weaker, the road becoming worse, and that we did not at all know where we were, or where we were going—or whether we should reach a station or even a shelter of any sort; it seemed strange and ridiculous to hear the bells ringing so easily and cheerfully, and Ignát shouting as lustily and pleasantly as if we were out for a drive along a village street on a frosty noon during a Twelfth Night holiday—and it was stranger still that we were always driving and driving fast somewhere from where we were. Ignát began to sing some song in a horrid falsetto, but so loud and with such intervals, during which he whistled, that it seemed ridiculous to be afraid while one heard him.

‘Hev there, what are you splitting your throat for, Ignát?’ came the advice-giver’s voice. ‘Stop a minute!’

‘What?’

‘Sto-o-op!’

Ignát stopped. Again all became silent, and the wind howled and whined, and the whirling snow fell still more thickly into the sledge. The advice-giver came up to us.

‘Well, what now?’

‘What now? Where are we going?’

‘Who can tell?’

‘Are your feet freezing, that you knock them together so?’



'Quite numb!'

'You should go over there: look, where there's something glimmering. It must be a Kulmýk camp. It would warm your feet too.'

'All right. Hold the reins . . . here you are.'

And Ignát ran in the direction indicated.

'You always have to go about a bit and look, then you find the way, or else what's the good of driving about like a fool?' the advice-giver said to me. 'See how the horses are steaming.'

All the time Ignát was gone—and that lasted so long that I even began to fear he might have lost his way—the advice-giver kept telling me in a self-confident and calm tone how one should behave in a snow storm, that it was best to unharness a horse and let it go, and, as God is holy, it would be sure to lead one out, and how it is sometimes possible to find the way by the stars, and that had he been driving in front we should long ago have reached the station.

'Well, is there anything?' he asked Ignát when the latter came back, stepping with difficulty knee-deep through the snow.

'There is, there is a camp of some sort,' replied Ignát, gasping for breath, 'but I can't tell what it is. We must have strayed right into the Prologov estate. We must bear off to the left.'

'What's he jabbering about? It's our camp that's behind the Cossack village,' rejoined the advice-giver.

'I tell you it's not!'

'Well, I've had a look too, and I know: that's what it is, and if it isn't, then it's Tamýshevsk. Anyhow we must bear to the right, and then we'll come right out to the big bridge at the eighth verst.'

'I tell you it's nothing of the sort. Haven't I looked?' said Ignát with annoyance.

'Eh, mate, and you call yourself a driver!'

'Yes, a driver! . . . Go and look for yourself.'

'Why should I go? I know without going.'

Hgnát had evidently grown angry: he jumped into the sledge without replying and drove on.

'How numb my legs have got! I can't warm them up,' said he to Alëshka, knocking his feet together oftener and oftener, and scooping up and emptying out the snow that had got into his boots.

I felt dreadfully sleepy.

### VIII

'CAN it be that I am freezing to death?' I thought, half asleep. 'They say it always begins with drowsiness. It would be better to drown than to freeze—let them drag me out with a net; but it does not matter much whether I freeze or drown if only that stick, or whatever it is, would not prod me in the back and I could forget myself!'

I did so for a few seconds.

'But how will all this end?' I suddenly asked myself, opening my eyes for a moment and peering into the white expanse before me. 'How will it all end? If we don't find any haystacks and the horses stop, as they seem likely to do soon, we shall all freeze to death.' I confess that, though I was a little afraid, the desire that something extraordinary, something rather tragic, should happen to us, was stronger in me than that fear. It seemed to me that it would not be bad if towards morning the horses brought us of their own accord, half-frozen, to some far-off unknown village, or if some of us were even to perish of the cold. Fancies of this kind presented themselves to me with extraordinary clearness and rapidity. The horses stop, the snow drifts higher and higher, and now nothing is seen of the horses

but their ears and the bows above their heads, but suddenly Ignát appears above us with his tróyka, and drives past. We entreat him, we shout that he should take us, but the wind carries our voices away—we have no voices left. Ignát grins, shouts to his horses, whistles, and disappears into some deep, snow-covered ravine. The little old man jumps astride a horse, flourishes his elbows and tries to gallop away, but cannot stir from the spot; my former driver with the big cap rushes at him, drags him to the ground and tramples him into the snow. 'You're a wizard!' he shouts. 'You're a scold! We shall all be lost together!' But the old man breaks through the heap of snow with his head; and now he is not so much an old man as a hare, and leaps away from us. All the dogs bound after him. The advice-giver, who is Theodore Filípych, tells us all to sit round in a circle, that if the snow covers us it will be all right—we shall be warm that way. And really we are warm and cosy, only I want a drink. I fetch out my lunch-basket, and treat everybody to rum and sugar, and enjoy a drink myself. The story-teller spins a tale about the rainbow, and now there is a ceiling of snow and a rainbow above us. 'Now let us each make himself a room in the snow and let us go to sleep!' I say. The snow is soft and warm, like fur. I make myself a room and want to enter it, but Theodore Filípych, who has seen the money in my lunch-basket, says: 'Stop! Give me your money—you have to die anyway!' And he grabs me by the leg. I hand over the money and only ask him to let me go; but they won't believe it is all the money I have, and want to kill me. I seize the old man's hand and begin to kiss it with inexpressible pleasure: his hand is tender and sweet. At first he snatches it from me, but afterwards lets me have it, and even caresses me with his other

and. Then Theodore Filipyeh comes near and threatens me. I run away into my room: it is, however, no longer a room but a long white corridor, and someone is holding my legs. I wrench myself free. My clothes and part of my skin remain in the hands of the man who was holding me, but I only feel cold and ashamed—all the more ashamed because my aunt with her parasol and homoeopathic medicine-chest under her arm is coming towards me arm-in-arm with the drowned man. They are laughing and do not understand the signs I make to them. I throw myself into the sledge, my feet trail behind me in the snow, but the old man rushes after me flapping his elbows. He is already near, but I hear two church bells ringing in front of me, and know that I shall be saved when I get to them. The church bells sound nearer and nearer; but the little old man has caught up with me and falls with his stomach on my face, so that I can scarcely hear the bells. I again grasp his hand and begin to kiss it, but the little old man is no longer the little old man, he is the man who was drowned . . . and he shouts: 'Ignát, stop! There are the Akhmétkins' stacks, I think! Go and have a look at them!' This is too terrible. No, I had better wake up . . .

I open my eyes. The wind has thrown the flap of Alëshka's cloak over my face, my knee is uncovered, we are going over the bare frozen road, and the bells with their quivering third can be distinctly heard.

I look to see the haystacks, but now that my eyes are open I see no stacks, but a house with a balcony and the crenellated wall of a fortress. I am not interested enough to scrutinize this house and fortress: I am chiefly anxious to see the white corridor along which I ran, to hear the sound of the

church bells, and to kiss the little old man's hand. at  
I close my eyes again and fall asleep. ca,

## IX

I SLEPT soundly, but heard the ringing of the bells all the time. They appeared to me in my dream now in the guise of a dog that barked and attacked me, now of an organ in which I was one of the pipes, and now of some French verses I was composing. Sometimes those bells seemed to be an instrument of torture which kept squeezing my right heel. I felt that so strongly that I woke up and opened my eyes, rubbing my foot. It was getting frost-bitten. The night was still light, misty, and white. The same motion was still shaking me and the sledge; the same Ignát sat sideways, knocking his feet together; the same off-horse with outstretched neck ran at a trot over the deep snow without lifting its feet much, while the tassel on the breeching bobbed and flapped against its belly. The head of the shaft-horse with its flying mane stooped and rose rhythmically as it alternately drew the reins tight and loosened them. But all this was covered with snow even more than before. The snow whirled about in front, at the side it covered the horses' legs knee-deep, and the runners of the sledge, while it fell from above on our collars and caps. The wind blew now from the right, now from the left, playing with Ignát's collar, the skirt of his cloak, the mane of the side-horse, and howling between the shafts and above the bow over the shaft-horse's head.

It was growing terribly cold, and hardly had I put my head out of my coat-collar before the frosty, crisp, whirling snow covered my eyelashes, got into my nose and mouth, and penetrated behind my neck. When I looked round, everything was white, light and snowy, there was nothing to be seen but

the dull light and the snow. I became seriously frightened. Aleshka was asleep at my feet at the bottom of the sledge, his whole back covered by thick layer of snow. Ignát did not lose courage: he kept pulling at the reins, shouting, and clapping his feet together. The bell went on ringing just as wonderfully. The horses snorted a little, but ran more slowly and stumbled more and more often. Ignat again leaped up, waved his mitten, and again began singing in his strained falsetto. Before finishing the song he stopped the tróyka, threw down the reins on the front of the sledge, and got out. The wind howled furiously; the snow poured on the skirts of our cloaks as out of a scoop. I turned round: the third tróyka was not to be seen (it had lagged behind somewhere). Near the second sledge, in the snowy mist, I saw the little old man jumping from foot to foot. Ignát went some three steps from the sledge, and sitting down in the snow undid his girdle and pulled off his boots.

'What are you doing?' I asked.

'I must change, or my feet will be quite frozen,' he replied, and went on with what he was doing.

It was too cold to keep my neck out of my collar to watch what he was doing. I sat up straight, looking at the off-horse, which with one leg wearily stretched out, painfully whisked its tail that was tied in a knot and covered with snow. The thump Ignát gave the sledge as he jumped onto his seat roused me.

'Where are we now?' I asked. 'Shall we get anywhere—say by daybreak?'

'Don't worry, we'll get you there,' he replied. 'Now that I have changed, my feet are much warmer.'

And he drove on, the bell began to ring, the sledged swayed again, and the wind whistled under

the runners. We again started to swim over the limitless sea of snow.

## X

I FELL soundly asleep. When Alëshka woke me up by pushing me with his foot, and I opened my eyes, it was already morning. It seemed even colder than in the night. No more snow was falling from above, but a stiff dry wind continued to sweep the powdery snow across the plain, and especially under the hoofs of the horses and the runners of the sledge. In the east, to our right, the sky was heavy and of a dark bluish colour, but bright orange oblique streaks were growing more and more defined in it. Overhead, through flying white clouds as yet scarcely tinged, gleamed the pale blue of the sky; on the left, bright, light clouds were drifting. Everywhere, as far as eye could see, deep snow lay over the plain in sharply defined layers. Here and there could be seen greyish mounds, over which fine, crisp, powdery snow swept steadily. No track either of sledge, man, or beast could be seen. The outlines and colour of the driver's back and of the horses were clearly and sharply visible even on the white background. The rim of Ignát's dark-blue cap, his collar, his hair, and even his boots were white. The sledge was completely covered with snow. The right side and forelock of the grey shaft-horse were thick with snow, the legs of the off-horse on my side were covered with it up to the knee, and its curly sweating flank was covered and frozen to a rough surface. The tassel still bobbed up and down in tune to any rhythm you liked to imagine, and the off-horse itself kept running in the same way, only the sunken, heaving belly and drooping ears showing how exhausted she was. The one novel object that attracted my attention was a verst-post from

which the snow was falling to the ground, and near which to the right the snow was swept into a mound by the wind, which still kept raging and rowing the crisp snow from side to side. I was very much surprised that we had travelled all night, twelve hours, with the same horses, without knowing where, and had arrived after all. Our bell seemed to tinkle yet more cheerfully. Ignát kept wrapping his cloak around him and shouting; the horses behind us snorted, and the bells of the little old man's and the advice-giver's tróyka tinkled, but the driver who had been asleep had certainly strayed from us in the steppe. After going another half-mile we came across the fresh, only partly obliterated, traces of a three-horsed sledge, and here and there pink spots of blood, probably from a horse that had overreached itself.

'That's Philip. Fancy his being ahead of us!' said Ignát.

But here by the roadside a lonely little house with a signboard was seen in the midst of the snow, which covered it almost to the top of the windows and to the roof. Near the inn stood a tróyka of grey horses, their coats curly with sweat, their legs outstretched and their heads drooping wearily. At the door there was a shovel and the snow had been cleared away, but the howling wind continued to sweep and whirl snow off the roof.

At the sound of our bells, a tall, ruddy-faced, red-haired peasant came out with a glass of vodka in his hand, and shouted something. Ignát turned to me and asked permission to stop. Then for the first time I fairly saw his face.

## XI

'His face was not swarthy and lean with a straight nose, as I had expected judging by his hair and



figure. It was a round, jolly, very snub-nosed face, with a large mouth and bright light-blue eyes. His cheeks and neck were red, as if rubbed with a flannel; his eyebrows, his long eyelashes, and the down that smoothly covered the bottom of his face, were plastered with snow and were quite white. We were only half a mile from our station and we stopped.

‘Only be quick about it!’ I said.

‘Just one moment,’ replied Ignát, springing down and walking over to Philip.

‘Let’s have it, brother,’ he said, taking the mitten from his right hand and throwing it down with his whip on the snow, and tossing back his head he emptied at a gulp the glass that was handed to him.

The innkeeper, probably a discharged Cossack, came out with a half-bottle in his hand.

‘Who shall I serve?’ said he.

Tall Vasili, a thin, brown-haired peasant, with a goatee beard, and the advice-giver, a stout, light-haired man with a thick beard framing his red face, came forward and also drank a glass each. The little old man too went over to the drinkers, but was not served, and he went back to his horses, which were fastened behind the sledge, and began stroking one of them on the back and croup.

The little old man’s appearance was just what I had imagined it to be: small, thin, with a wrinkled livid face, a scanty beard, sharp little nose, and worn yellow teeth. He had a new driver’s cap on but his coat was shabby, worn, smeared with tar torn on one shoulder, had holes in the skirt, and did not cover his knees and the homespun trousers which were tucked into his huge felt boots. He himself was bent double, puckered up, his face and knees trembled, and he tramped about near the sledge evidently trying to get warm.

'Come, Mítrich, you should have a glass; you'd t fine and warm,' said the advice-giver.

Mítrich's face twitched. He adjusted the harness one of his horses, straightened the bow above its ad, and came over to me.

'Well, sir,' he said, taking the cap off his grey ad and bending low, 'we have been wandering out together all night, looking for the road: won't ou give me enough for a small glass?' Really sir, our honour! I haven't anything to get warm on,' ad added with an ingratiating smile.

I gave him a quarter-ruble.<sup>1</sup> The innkeeper brought out a small glass of vodka and handed it to the old man. He took off his mitten, together with the whip that hung on it, and put out his small, dark, rough, and rather livid hand towards the glass; but his thumb refused to obey him, as though it did not belong to him. He was unable to hold the glass and dropped it on the snow, spilling the vodka.

All the drivers burst out laughing.

'See how frozen Mítrich is, he can't even hold the vodka.'

But Mítrich was greatly grieved at having spilt the vodka.

However, they filled another glass for him and poured it into his mouth. He became cheerful in a moment, ran into the inn, lit his pipe, showed his worn yellow teeth, and began to swear at every word he spoke. Having drained the last glass, the drivers returned to their tróykas and we started again.

The snow kept growing whiter and brighter so that it hurt one's eyes to look at it. The orange-tinted reddish streaks rose higher and higher, and growing brighter and brighter spread upwards over

<sup>1</sup> At that time about sixpence.

the sky; even the red disk of the sun became visible on the horizon through the blue-grey clouds; the sky grew more brilliant and of a deeper blue. On the road near the settlement the sledge tracks were clear, distinct, and yellowish, and here and there we were jolted by cradle-holes in the road; one could feel a pleasant lightness and freshness in the tense, frosty air.

My tróyka went very fast. The head of the shaft-horse, and its neck with its mane fluttering around the bow, swayed swiftly from side to side almost in one place under the special bell, the tongue of which no longer struck the sides but scraped against them. The good off-horses tugged together at the frozen and twisted traces, and sprang energetically, while the tassel bobbed from right under the horse's belly to the breeching. Now and then an off-horse would stumble from the beaten track into the snowdrift, throwing up the snow into one's eyes as it briskly got out again. Ignát shouted in his merry tenor; the dry frosty snow squeaked under the runners; behind us two little bells were ringing resonantly and festively, and I could hear the tipsy shouting of the drivers. I looked back. The grey shaggy off-horses, with their necks outstretched and breathing evenly, their bits awry, were leaping over the snow. Philip, flourishing his whip, was adjusting his cap; the little old man, with his legs hanging out, lay in the middle of the sledge as before.

Two minutes later my sledge scraped over the boards before the clean-swept entrance of the station house, and Ignát turned to me his snow-covered merry face, smelling of frost.

'We've got you here after all, sir!' he said.

## TWO HUSSARS



## TWO HUSSARS

### A STORY

'*Jomini and Jomini—*

*Not half a word of vodka.*'—D. DAVÝDOV.<sup>1</sup>

EARLY in the nineteenth century, when there were as yet no railways or macadamized roads, no gaslight, no stearine candles, no low couches with sprung cushions, no unvarnished furniture, no disillusioned youths with eye-glasses, no liberalizing women philosophers, nor any charming *dames aux camélias* of whom there are so many in our times, in those naïve days, when leaving Moscow for Petersburg in a coach or carriage provided with a kitchenful of home-made provisions one travelled for eight days along a soft, dusty, or muddy road and believed in chopped cutlets, sledge-bells, and plain rolls; when in the long autumn evenings the tallow candles, around which family groups of twenty or thirty people gathered, had to be snuffed; when ball-rooms were illuminated by candelabra with wax or spermaceti candles, when furniture was arranged symmetrically, when our fathers were still young and proved it not only by the absence of wrinkles and grey hair but by fighting duels for the sake of a woman and rushing from the opposite corner of a room to pick up a bit of a handkerchief purposely or accidentally dropped; when our mothers wore short-waisted dresses and enormous sleeves and decided family affairs by drawing lots, when the charming *dames aux camélias* hid from the light of day—in those naïve days of Masonic lodges,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *The Song of an old Hussar*, in which the great days of the past are contrasted with the trivial present. D. V. Davýdov is referred to in *War and Peace*.

<sup>2</sup> Freemasonry in Russia was a secret association, the

Martinists,<sup>1</sup> and Tugendbunds,<sup>2</sup> the days of Milorádoviches<sup>3</sup> and Davýdovs<sup>4</sup> and Púshkins—a meeting of landed proprietors was held in the Government town of K——, and the nobility elections<sup>5</sup> were being concluded.

## I

‘WELL, never mind, the saloon will do,’ said a young officer in a fur cloak and hussar’s cap, who had just got out of a post-sledge and was entering the best hotel in the town of K——.

‘The assembly, your Excellency, is enormous,’ said the boots, who had already managed to learn from the orderly that the hussar’s name was Count Túbin, and therefore addressed him as ‘your Excellency’.

‘The proprietress of Aliémovo with her daughters has said she is leaving this evening, so No. 11 will be at your disposal as soon as they go,’ continued the boots, stepping softly before the count along the passage and continually looking round.

In the general saloon at a little table under the original purpose of which was the moral perfecting of people on the basis of equality and universal brotherhood. Commencing as a mystical-religious movement in the eighteenth century, it became political during the reign of Alexander I, and was suppressed in 1822.

<sup>1</sup> The Martinists were a society of Russian Freemasons founded in 1780 and named after the French theosophist, Louis Claude Saint-Martin.

<sup>2</sup> See note on pages 361–2 of vol. iii of *War and Peace*.

<sup>3</sup> M. H. Miloradovich (1770–1825) distinguished himself in the Napoleonic war, became Governor-General of Petersburg, and was killed when suppressing the ‘Decembrist’ mutiny in 1825. He appears in *War and Peace*.

<sup>4</sup> D. V. Davýdov (1784–1839), a popular poet, and leader of a guerrilla force in the war of 1812. A. S. Púshkin (1799–1837), the greatest of Russian poets, was his contemporary.

<sup>5</sup> The nobility included not merely those who had titles, but all who in England would be called the gentry.

gungy full-length portrait of the Emperor Alexander the First, several men, probably belonging to the local nobility, sat drinking champagne, while at another side of the room sat some travellers—tradesmen in blue, fur-lined cloaks.

Entering the room and calling in Blucher, a gigantic grey mastiff he had brought with him, the count threw off his cloak, the collar of which was still covered with hoar-frost, called for vodka, sat down at the table in his blue satin Cossack jacket, and entered into conversation with the gentlemen there.

The handsome open countenance of the newcomer immediately predisposed them in his favour and they offered him a glass of champagne. The count first drank a glass of vodka and then ordered another bottle of champagne to treat his new acquaintances. The sledge-driver came in to ask for a tip.

'Sáshka!' shouted the count. 'Give him something!'

The driver went out with Sáshka but came back again with the money in his hand.

'Look here, y'r 'xcelence, haven't I done my very best for y'r honour? Didn't you promise me half a ruble, and he's only given me a quarter!'

'Give him a ruble, Sáshka.'

Sáshka cast down his eyes and looked at the driver's feet.

'He's had enough!' he said, in a bass voice. 'And besides, I have no more money.'

The count drew from his pocket-book the two five-ruble notes which were all it contained, and gave one of them to the driver, who kissed his hand and went off.

'I've run it pretty close!' said the count. 'These are my last five rubles.'

'Real hussar fashion, Count,' said one of the



nobles who from his moustache, voice, and a certain energetic freedom about his legs, was evidently a retired cavalryman. 'Are you staying here some time, Count?

'I must get some money. I shouldn't have stayed here at all but for that. And there are no rooms to be had, devil take them, in this accursed pub.'

'Permit me, Count,' said the cavalryman. 'Will you not join me? My room is No. 7 . . . . If you do not mind, just for the night. And then you'll stay a couple of days with us? It happens that the *Maréchal de la Noblesse* is giving a ball to-night. You would make him very happy by going.'

'Yes, Count, do stay,' said another, a handsome young man. 'You have surely no reason to hurry away! You know this only comes once in three years—the elections, I mean. You should at least have a look at our young ladies, Count!'

'Sáshka, get my clean linen ready. I am going to the bath,' said the count, rising, 'and from there perhaps I may look in at the Marshal's.'

Then, having called the waiter and whispered something to him to which the latter replied with a smile, 'That can all be arranged,' he went out.<sup>2</sup>

'So I'll order my trunk to be taken to your room old fellow,' shouted the count from the passage.

'Please do, I shall be most happy,' replied the cavalryman, running to the door. 'No. 7—don't forget.'

When the count's footsteps could no longer be heard the cavalryman returned to his place and sitting close to one of the group—a Government

<sup>1</sup> For a Russian bath, as for a Turkish bath, one goes to a public establishment and subjects oneself to heat that produces profuse perspiration.

<sup>2</sup> It was not unusual at the bath to associate with a woman.

official—and looking him straight in the face with smiling eyes, said:

‘It is the very man, you know!’

‘No!’

‘I tell you it is! It is the very same duellist hussar—the famous Túrbin. He knew me—I bet you anything he knew me. Why, he and I went on the spree for three weeks without a break when I was at Lebedyáni<sup>1</sup> for remounts. There was one thing he and I did together. . . . He’s a fine fellow, eh?’

‘A splendid fellow. And so pleasant in his manner! Doesn’t show a grain of—what d’you call it?’ answered the handsome young man. ‘How quickly we became intimate. . . . He’s not more than twenty-five, is he?’

‘Oh no, that’s what he looks but he is more than that. One has to get to know him, you know. Who abducted Migúnova? He. It was he who killed Sáblin. It was he who dropped Matnév out of the window by his legs. It was he who won three hundred thousand rubles from Prince Néstorov. He is a regular dare-devil, you know: a gambler, a duellist, a seducer, but a jewel of an hussar—a real jewel. The rumours that are afloat about us are nothing to the reality—if anyone knew what a true hussar is! Ah yes, those were times!’

And the cavalryman told his interlocutor of such a spree with the count in Lebedyáni as not only never had, but never even could have, taken place.

It could not have done so, first because he had never seen the count till that day and had left the army two years before the count entered it; and secondly because the cavalryman had never really served in the cavalry at all, but had for four years been the humblest of cadets in the Belévski regiment, and retired as soon as ever he became ensign.

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But ten years ago he had inherited some money and had really been in Lebedyáni where he squandered seven hundred rubles with some officers who were there buying remounts. He had even gone so far as to have an uhlan uniform made with orange facings, meaning to enter an uhlan regiment. This desire to enter the cavalry, and the three weeks spent with the remount officers at Lebedyáni, remained the brightest and happiest memories of his life, so he transformed the desire first into a reality and then into a reminiscence and came to believe firmly in his past as a cavalry officer - all of which did not prevent his being, as to gentleness and honesty, a most worthy man.

'Yes, those who have never served in the cavalry will never understand us fellows.'

He sat astride a chair and thrusting out his lower jaw began to speak in a bass voice. 'You ride at the head of your squadron, not a horse but the devil incarnate prancing about under you, and you just sit in devil-may-care style. The squadron commander rides up to review: "Lieutenant," he says. "We can't get on without you - please lead the squadron to parade." "All right," you say, and there you are: you turn round, shout to your moustached fellows. . . . Ah, devil take it, those were times!'

The count returned from the bath-house very red and with wet hair, and went straight to No. 7, where the cavalryman was already sitting in his dressing-gown smoking a pipe and considering with pleasure, and not without some apprehension, the happiness that had befallen him of sharing a room with the celebrated Turbin. 'Now suppose,' he thought, 'that he suddenly takes me, strips me naked, drives me to the town gates and sets me in the snow, or . . . tars me, or simply. . . . But no,' he consoled himself, 'he wouldn't do that to a comrade.'

'Sáshka, feed Blücher!' shouted the count.

Sáshka, who had taken a tumbler of vodka to refresh himself after the journey and was decidedly tipsy, came in.

'What, already! You've been drinking, you rascal! . . . Feed Blücher!'

'He won't starve anyway: see how sleek he is!' answered Sáshka, stroking the dog.

'Silence! Be off and feed him!'

'You want the dog to be fed, but when a man drinks a glass you reproach him.'

'Hey! I'll thrash you!' shouted the count in a voice that made the window-panes rattle and even frightened the cavalryman a bit.

'You should ask if Sáshka has had a bite to-day! Yes, beat me if you think more of a dog than of a man,' muttered Sáshka.

But here he received such a terrible blow in the face from the count's fist that he fell, knocked his head against the partition, and clutching his nose fled from the room and fell on a settee in the passage.

'He's knocked my teeth out,' grunted Sáshka, wiping his bleeding nose with one hand while with the other he scratched the back of Blücher, who was licking himself. 'He's knocked my teeth out, Blüchy, but still he's my count and I'd go through fire for him—I would! Because he—is my count. Do you understand, Blüchy? Want your dinner, eh?'

After lying still for a while he rose, fed the dog, and then, almost sobered, went in to wait on his count and to offer him some tea.

'I shall really feel hurt,' the cavalryman was saying meekly, as he stood before the count who was lying on the other's bed with his legs up against the partition. 'You see I also am an old army man and,

if I may say so, a comrade. Why should you borrow from anyone else when I shall be delighted to lend you a couple of hundred rubles? I haven't got them just now—only a hundred rubles—but I'll get the rest to-day. You would really hurt my feelings, Count.'

'Thank you, old man,' said the count, instantly discerning what kind of relations had to be established between them, and slapping the cavalryman on the shoulder: 'Thanks! Well then, we'll go to the ball if it must be so. But what are we to do now? Tell me what you have in your town. What pretty girls? What men fit for a spree? What gaming?'

The cavalryman explained that there would be an abundance of pretty creatures at the ball, that Kólkov, who had been re-elected Captain of Police, was the best hand at a spree, only he lacked the true hussar go—otherwise he was a good sort of a chap: that the Ilyúshin gipsy chorus had been singing in the town since the elections began, Steshka leading, and that everybody meant to go to hear them after leaving the Marshal's that evening.

'And there's a devilish lot of card-playing too,' he went on. 'Lúkhnov plays. He has money and is staying here to break his journey, and Ilyín, an uhlan cornet who has room No. 8, has lost a lot. They have already begun in his room. They play every evening. And what a fine fellow that Ilyín is! I tell you, Count, he's not mean—he'll let his last shirt go.'

'Well then, let us go to his room. Let's see what sort of people they are,' said the count.

'Yes do—pray do. They'll be devilish glad.'

## II

THE uhlan cornet, Ilyín, had not long been awake. The evening before he had sat down to cards at eight o'clock and had lost pretty steadily for fifteen

ours on end—till eleven in the morning. He had lost a considerable sum, but did not know exactly how much, because he had about three thousand rubles of his own, and fifteen thousand of Crown money which had long since got mixed up with his own, and he feared to count lest his fears that some of the Crown money was already gone should be confirmed. It was nearly noon when he fell asleep and he had slept that heavy dreamless sleep which only very young men sleep after a heavy loss. Waking at six o'clock (just when Count Túrbin arrived at the hotel), and seeing the floor all around strewn with cards and bits of chalk, and the chalk-marked tables in the middle of the room, he recalled with horror last night's play, and the last card—a knave on which he lost five hundred rubles; but not yet quite convinced of the reality of all this, he drew his money from under the pillow and began to count it. He recognized some notes which had passed from hand to hand several times with 'corners' and 'transports', and he recalled the whole course of the game. He had none of his own three thousand rubles left, and some two thousand five hundred of the Government money was also gone.

Ilyín had been playing for four nights running.

He had come from Moscow where the Crown money had been entrusted to him, and at K—— had been detained by the superintendent of the post-house on the pretext that there were no horses, but really because the superintendent had an agreement with the hotel-keeper to detain all travellers for a day. The uhlan, a bright young lad who had just received three thousand rubles from his parents in Moscow for his equipment on entering his regiment, was glad to spend a few days in the town of K—— during the elections, and hoped to enjoy himself thoroughly. He knew one of the landed gentry



there who had a family, and he was thinking of looking them up and flirting with the daughter when the cavalryman turned up to make his acquaintance. Without any evil intention the cavalryman introduced him that same evening, in the general saloon or common room of the hotel, to his acquaintances, Lúkhnov and other gamblers. And ever since then the uhlan had been playing cards not asking at the post-station for horses, much less going to visit his acquaintance the landed proprietor, and not even leaving his room for four days or end.

Having dressed and drunk tea he went to the window. He felt that he would like to go for a stroll to get rid of the recollections that haunted him, and he put on his cloak and went out into the street. The sun was already hidden behind the white houses with their red roofs and it was getting dusk. It was warm for winter. Large wet snowflakes were falling slowly into the muddy street. Suddenly at the thought that he had slept all through the day now ending, a feeling of intolerable sadness overcame him.

'This day, now past, can never be recovered,' he thought.

'I have ruined my youth!' he suddenly said to himself, not because he really thought he had ruined his youth—he did not even think about it—but because the phrase happened to occur to him.

'And what am I to do now?' thought he. 'Borrow from someone and go away?' A lady passed him along the pavement. 'There's a stupid woman,' thought he for some reason. 'There's no one to borrow from . . . I have ruined my youth!' He came to the bazaar. A tradesman in a fox-fur cloak stood at the door of his shop touting for customers. 'If I had not withdrawn that eight I should have

recovered my losses.' An old beggar-woman followed him whimpering. 'There's no one to borrow from.' A man drove past in a bearskin cloak; a policeman was standing at his post. 'What unusual thing could I do? Fire at them? No, it's dull . . . I have ruined my youth! . . . Ah, those are fine horse-collars and trappings hanging there! Ah, if only I could drive in a *tróyka*: Gee-up, beauties! . . . I'll go back. Lúkhnov will come soon, and we'll play.'

He returned to the hotel and again counted his money. No, he had made no mistake the first time: there were still two thousand five hundred rubles of Crown money missing. 'I'll stake twenty-five rubles, then make a 'corner' . . . seven-fold it, fifteen-fold, thirty, sixty . . . three thousand rubles. Then I'll buy the horse-collars and be off. He won't let me, the rascal! I have ruined my youth!'

That is what was going on in the uhlan's head when Lúkhnov actually entered the room.

'Have you been up long, Michael Vasilích?' asked Lúkhnov slowly removing the gold spectacles from his skinny nose and carefully wiping them with a red silk handkerchief.

'No, I've only just got up--I slept uncommonly well.'

'Some hussar or other has arrived. He has put up with Zavalshévski--had you heard?'

'No, I hadn't. But how is it no one else is here yet?'

'They must have gone to Pryákhin's. They'll be here directly.'

And sure enough a little later there came into the room a garrison officer who always accompanied Lúkhnov; a Greek merchant with an enormous brown hooked nose and sunken black eyes, and a fat puffy landowner, the proprietor of a distillery, who played whole nights, always staking 'simples' of

half a ruble each. Everybody wished to begin playing as soon as possible, but the principal gamblers, especially Lúkhnov who was telling about a robbery in Moscow in an exceedingly calm manner, did not refer to the subject.

‘Just fancy,’ he said, ‘a city like Moscow, the historic capital, a metropolis, and men dressed up as devils go about there with crooks, frighten stupid people and rob the passers-by—and that’s the end of it! What are the police about? That’s the question.’

The uhlan listened attentively to the story about the robbers, but when a pause came he rose and quietly ordered cards to be brought. The fat landowner was the first to speak out.

‘Well, gentlemen, why lose precious time? If we mean business let’s begin.’

‘Yes, you walked off with a pile of half-rubles last night so you like it,’ said the Greek.

‘I think we might start,’ said the garrison officer.

Ilyín looked at Lúkhnov. Lúkhnov looking him in the eye quietly continued his story about robbers dressed up like devils with claws.

‘Will you keep the bank?’ asked the uhlan.

‘Isn’t it too early?’

‘Belóv!’ shouted the uhlan, blushing for some unknown reason, ‘bring me some dinner—I haven’t had anything to eat yet, gentlemen—and a bottle of champagne and some cards.’

At this moment the count and Zavalshévski entered the room. It turned out that Túrbin and Ilyín belonged to the same division. They took to one another at once, clinked glasses, drank champagne together, and were on intimate terms in five minutes. The count seemed to like Ilyín very much; he looked smilingly at him and teased him about his youth.

'There's an uhlan of the right sort!' he said. 'What moustaches! Dear me, what moustaches!'

Even what little down there was on Ilyín's lip was quite white.

'I suppose you are going to play?' said the count: 'Well, I wish you luck, Ilyín! I should think you are a master at it,' he added with a smile.

'Yes, they mean to start,' said Lúkhnov, tearing open a bundle of a dozen packs of cards, 'and you'll join in too, Count, won't you?'

'No, not to-day. I should clear you all out if I did. When I begin "cornering" in earnest the bank begins to crack! But I have nothing to play with—I was cleaned out at a station near Volochók. I met some infantry fellow there with rings on his fingers—a sharper I should think—and he plucked me clean.'

'Why, did you stay at that station long?' asked Ilyín.

'I sat there for twenty-two hours. I shan't forget that accursed station! And the superintendent won't forget me either . . .'

'How's that?'

'I drive up, you know; out rushes the superintendent looking a regular brigand. "No horses!" says he. Now I must tell you that it's my rule, if there are no horses I don't take off my fur cloak but go into the superintendent's own room—not into the public room but into his private room—and I have all the doors and windows opened on the ground that it's smoky. Well, that's just what I did there. You remember what frosts we had last month? About twenty degrees!<sup>1</sup> The superintendent began to argue, I punched his head. There was an old woman there, and girls and other women; they kicked up a row, snatched up their pots and pans

<sup>1</sup> Réaumur = thirteen below zero Fahrenheit.

and were rushing off to the village. . . . I went to the door and said, "Let me have horses and I'll be off. If not, no one shall go out: I'll freeze you all!"

"That's an infernally good plan!" said the puff squire, rolling with laughter. "It's the way the freeze out cockroaches . . ."

"But I didn't watch carefully enough and the superintendent got away with the women. Only one old woman remained in pawn on the top of the stove; she kept sneezing and saying her prayers. Afterwards we began negotiating: the superintendent came and from a distance began persuading me to let the old woman go, but I set Blucher at him a bit. Blucher's splendid at tackling superintendents! But still the rascal didn't let me have horses until the next morning. Meanwhile that infantry fellow came along. I joined him in another room, and we began to play. You have seen Blucher? . . . Blucher! . . ." and he gave a whistle.

Blucher rushed in, and the players condescendingly paid some attention to him though it was evident that they wished to attend to quite other matters.

"But why don't you play, gentlemen? Please don't let me prevent you. I am a chatterbox, you see," said Túrbín. "Play is play whether one likes it or not."

### III

LÚKHNOV drew two candles nearer to him, took out a large brown pocket-book full of paper money, and slowly, as if performing some rite, opened it on the table, took out two one-hundred ruble notes and placed them under the cards.

"Two hundred for the bank, the same as yesterday," said he, adjusting his spectacles and opening a pack of cards.

'Very well,' said Ilyín, continuing his conversation with Túrbín without looking at Lúknov.

The game<sup>1</sup> started. Lúkhnov dealt the cards with machine-like precision, stopping now and then and deliberately jotting something down, or looking sternly over his spectacles and saying in low tones, 'Pass up!' The fat landowner spoke louder than anyone else, audibly deliberating with himself and wetting his plump fingers when he turned down the corner of a card. The garrison officer silently and neatly noted the amount of his stake on his card and bent down small corners under the table. The Greek sat beside the banker watching the game attentively with his sunken black eyes, and seemed to be waiting for something. Zavalshévski standing by the table would suddenly begin to fidget all over, take a red or blue bank-note<sup>2</sup> out of his trouser pocket, lay a card on it, slap it with his palm and say: 'Little seven, pull me through!' Then he would bite his moustache, shift from foot to foot, and keep fidgeting till his card was dealt. Ilyín sat eating veal and pickled cucumbers, which were placed beside him on the horsehair sofa, and hastily wiping his hands on his coat laid down one card after another. Túrbín, who at first was sitting on the sofa, quickly saw how matters stood. Lúkhnov did not look at or speak to Ilyín, only now and then his spectacles would

<sup>1</sup> The game referred to was *shlos*. The players selected cards for themselves from packs on the table, and placed their stakes on or under their cards. The banker had a pack from which he dealt to right and left alternately. Cards dealt to the right won for him, those dealt to the left won for the players. 'Pass up' was a reminder to the players to hand up stakes due to the bank. 'Simples' were single stakes. By turning down 'corners' of his card a player increased his stake two- or three-fold. A 'transport' increased it six-fold. *Shlos* has long gone out of fashion and been replaced by other forms of gambling.

<sup>2</sup> Five-ruble notes were blue and ten-ruble notes red.

turn for a moment towards the latter's hand, but most of Ilyín's cards lost.

'There now, I'd like to beat that card,' said Lúkhnov of a card the fat landowner, who was staking half-rubles, had put down.

'You beat Ilyín's, never mind me!' remarked the squire

And indeed Ilyín's cards lost more often than any of the others. He would tear up the losing card nervously under the table and choose another with trembling fingers. Túrbin rose from the sofa and asked the Greek to let him sit by the banker. The Greek moved to another place, the count took his chair and began watching Lúkhnov's hands attentively, not taking his eyes off them.

'Ilyín!' he suddenly said in his usual voice, which quite unintentionally drowned all the others. 'Why do you keep to a routine? You don't know how to play.'

'It's all the same how one plays.'

'But you're sure to lose that way. Let me play for you.'

'No, please excuse me. I always do it myself. Play for yourself if you like.'

'I said I should not play for myself, but I should like to play for you. I am vexed that you are losing.'

'I suppose it's my fate.'

The count was silent, but leaning on his elbows he again gazed intently at the banker's hands.

'Abominable!' he suddenly said in a loud, long-drawn tone.

Lúkhnov glanced at him.

'Abominable, quite abominable!' he repeated till louder, looking straight into Lúkhnov's eyes.

The game continued.

'It is not right!' Túrbin remarked again, just as Lúkhnov beat a heavily-backed card of Ilyín's.

‘What is it you don’t like, Count?’ inquired the banker with polite indifference.

‘This!—that you let Ilyín win his simples and beat his corners. That’s what’s bad.’

Lúkhnov made a slight movement with his brows and shoulders, expressing the advisability of submitting to fate in everything, and continued to play.

‘Blucher!’ shouted the count, rising and whistling to the dog. ‘At him!’ he added quickly.

Blucher, bumping his back against the sofa as he leapt from under it and nearly upsetting the garrison officer, ran to his master and growled, looking round at everyone and moving his tail as if asking, ‘Who is misbehaving here, eh?’

Lúkhnov put down his cards and moved his chair to one side.

‘One can’t play like that,’ he said. ‘I hate dogs. What kind of a game is it when you bring a whole pack of hounds in here?’

‘Especially a dog like that. I believe they are called “leeches”,’ chimed in the garrison officer.

‘Well, are we going to play or not, Michael Vasilch?’ said Lúkhnov to their host.

‘Please don’t interfere with us, Count,’ said Ilyín, turning to Túrbín.

‘Come here a minute,’ said Túrbín, taking Ilyín’s arm and going behind the partition with him.

The count’s words, spoken in his usual tone, were distinctly audible from there. His voice always carried across three rooms.

‘Are you daft, eh? Don’t you see that that gentleman in spectacles is a sharper of the first water?’

‘Come now, enough! What are you saying?’

‘No enough about it! Stop playing, I tell you. It’s nothing to me. Another time I’d pluck you myself, but somehow I’m sorry to see you fleeced. And maybe you have Crown money too?’



'No . . . why do you imagine such things?'

'Ah, my lad, I've been that way myself so I know all those sharpers' tricks. I tell you the one in spectacles is a sharper. Stop playing! I ask you as a comrade.'

'Well then, I'll only finish this one deal.'

'I know what "one deal" means. Well, we'll see.'

They went back. In that one deal Ilyín put down so many cards and so many of them were beaten that he lost a large amount.

Túrbin put his hands in the middle of the table. 'Now stop it! Come along.'

'No, I can't. Leave me alone, do!' said Ilyín, irritably shuffling some bent cards without looking at Túrbin.

'Well, go to the devil! Go on losing for certain, if that pleases you. It's time for me to be off. Let's go to the Marshal's, Zavalshévski.'

They went out. All remained silent and Lúkhnov dealt no more cards until the sound of their steps and of Blucher's claws on the passage floor had died away.

'What a devil of a fellow!' said the landowner laughing.

'Well, he won't interfere now,' remarked the garrison officer hastily, and still in a whisper.

And the play continued.

#### IV

THE band, composed of some of the Marshal's serfs standing in the pantry—which had been cleared out for the occasion—with their coat-sleeves turned up ready, had at a given signal struck up the old polonaise, 'Alexander, 'Lizabeth', and under the bright soft light of the wax-candles a Governor-General of Catharine's days, with a star on his breast, arm-in-arm with the Marshal's skinny wife,

and the rest of the local grandees with their partners, had begun slowly gliding over the parquet floor of the large dancing-room in various combinations and variations, when Zavalshévski entered, wearing stockings and pumps and a blue swallow-tail coat with an immense and padded collar, and exhaling a strong smell of the frangipane with which the linings of his coat, his handkerchief, and his moustaches, were abundantly sprinkled. The handsome hussar who came with him wore tight-fitting light-blue riding-breeches and a gold-embroidered scarlet coat on which a Vladímir cross and an 1812 medal<sup>1</sup> were fastened. The count was not tall but remarkably well built. His clear blue and exceedingly brilliant eyes, and thick, closely curling, dark-brown hair, gave a remarkable character to his beauty. His arrival at the ball was expected, for the handsome young man who had seen him at the hotel had already prepared the Marshal for it. Various impressions had been produced by the news, for the most part not altogether pleasant.

‘It’s not unlikely that this youngster will hold us up to ridicule,’ was the opinion of the men and of the older women. ‘What if he should run away with me?’ was more or less in the minds of the younger ladies, married or unmarried.

\* As soon as the polonaise was over and the couples after bowing to one another had separated—the women into one group and the men into another—Zavalshévski, proud and happy, introduced the count to their hostess.

The Marshal’s wife, feeling an inner trepidation lest this hussar should treat her in some scandalous manner before everybody, turned away haughtily and contemptuously as she said: ‘Very pleased, I

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, a medal gained in the defence of his country against Napoleon.

hope you will dance,' and then gave him a distrustful look that said, 'Now, if you offend a woman I will show me that you are a perfect villain.' The count however soon conquered her prejudices by his amiability, attentive manner, and handsome gay appearance, so that five minutes later the expression on the face of the Marshal's wife told the company: 'I know how to manage such gentlemen. He immediately understood with whom he had to deal, and now he'll be charming to me for the rest of the evening.' Moreover at that moment the governor of the town, who had known the count's father, came up to him and very affably took him aside for a talk, which still further calmed the provincial public and raised the count in its estimation. After that Zavalshévski introduced the count to his sister, a plump young widow whose large black eyes had not left the count from the moment he entered. The count asked her to dance the waltz the band had just commenced, and the general prejudice was finally dispersed by the masterly way in which he danced.

'What a splendid dancer!' said a fat landed proprietress, watching his legs in their blue riding-breeches as they flitted across the room, and mentally counting 'one, two, three—one, two, three—splendid!'

'There he goes—jig, jig, jig,' said another, a visitor in the town whom local society did not consider genteel. 'How does he manage not to entangle his spurs? Wonderfully clever!'

The count's artistic dancing eclipsed the three best dancers of the province: the tall fair-haired adjutant of the governor, noted for the rapidity with which he danced and for holding his partner, very close to him; the cavalryman, famous for the graceful swaying motion with which he waltzed and

for the frequent but light tapping of his heels; and a civilian, of whom everybody said that though he was not very intellectual he was a first-rate dancer and the soul of every ball. In fact, from its very commencement this civilian would ask all the ladies in turn to dance, in the order in which they were sitting,<sup>1</sup> and never stopped for a moment except occasionally to wipe the perspiration from his weary but cheerful face with a very wet cambric handkerchief. The count eclipsed them all and danced with the three principal ladies: the tall one, rich, handsome, stupid; the one of middle height, thin and not very pretty but splendidly dressed; and the little one, who was plain but very clever. He danced with others too—with all the pretty ones, and there were many of these—but it was Zavalshévski's sister, the little widow, who pleased him best. With her he danced a quadrille, an *écossaise*, and a mazurka. When they were sitting down during the quadrille he began paying her many compliments; comparing her to Venus and Diana, to a rose, and to some other flower. But all these compliments only made the widow bend her white neck, lower her eyes and look at her white muslin dress, or pass her fan from hand to hand. But when she said: 'Don't, you're only joking, Count,' and other words to that effect, there was a note of such naïve simplicity and amusing silliness in her slightly guttural voice, that looking at her it really seemed that this was not a woman but a flower, and not a rose, but some gorgeous scentless rosy-white wild flower that had grown all alone out of a snowdrift in some very remote land.

This combination of naiveté and unconventionality

<sup>1</sup> The custom was, not to dance a whole dance with one lady but to take a few turns round the room, conduct her to her seat, bow to her, thank her, and seek a fresh partner.

with her fresh beauty created such a peculiar impression on the count that several times during the intervals of conversation, when gazing silently into her eyes or at the beautiful outline of her neck and arms, the desire to seize her in his arms and cover her with kisses assailed him with such force that he had to make a serious effort to resist it. The widow noticed with pleasure the effect she was producing, yet something in the count's behaviour began to frighten and excite her, though the young hussar, despite his insinuating amiability, was respectful to a degree that in our days would be considered cloying. He ran to fetch almond-milk for her, picked up her handkerchief, snatched a chair from the hands of a scrofulous young squire who danced attendance on her, to hand it her more quickly, and so forth.

When he noticed that the society attentions of the day had little effect on the lady he tried to amuse her by telling her funny stories and assured her that he was ready to stand on his head, to crow like a cock, to jump out of the window or plunge into the water through a hole in the ice, if she ordered him to do so. This proved quite a success. The widow brightened up and burst into peals of laughter, showing lovely white teeth, and was quite satisfied with her cavalier. The count liked her more and more every minute, so that by the end of the quadrille he was seriously in love with her.

When, after the quadrille, her eighteen-year-old adorer of long standing came up to the widow (he was the same scrofulous young man from whom Túrbin had snatched the chair—a son of the richest local landed proprietor and not yet in government service) she received him with extreme coolness and did not show one-tenth of the confusion she had experienced with the count.

'Well, you are a fine fellow!' she said, looking all the time at Túrbin's back and unconsciously considering how many yards of gold cord it had taken to embroider his whole jacket. 'You are a good one! You promised to call and fetch me for a drive and bring me some comfits.'

'I did come, Anna Fëdorovna, but you had already gone, and I left some of the very best comfits for you,' said the young man, who—despite his tallness—spoke in a very high-pitched voice.

'You always find excuses! . . . I don't want your bonbons. Please don't imagine—'

'I see, Anna Fëdorovna, that you have changed towards me and I know why. But it's not right,' he added, evidently unable to finish his speech because a strong inward agitation caused his lips to quiver in a very strange and rapid manner.

Anna Fëdorovna did not listen to him, but continued to follow Túrbin with her eyes.

The master of the house, the stout, toothless, stately old Marshal, came up to the count, took him by the arm, and invited him into the study for a smoke and a drink. As soon as Túrbin left the room Anna Fëdorovna felt that there was absolutely nothing to do there and went out into the dressing-room arm-in-arm with a friend of hers, a bony, elderly, maiden lady.

'Well, is he nice?' asked the maiden lady.

'Only he bothers so!' Anna Fëdorovna replied walking up to the mirror and looking at herself.

Her face brightened, her eyes laughed, she even blushed, and suddenly, imitating the ballet-dancers she had seen during the elections, she twirled round on one foot, then laughed her guttural but pleasant laugh and even bent her knees and gave a jump.

'Just fancy, what a man! He actually asked me for a keepsake,' she said to her friend, 'but he will

get no-o-o-thing.' She sang the last word and held up one finger in her kid glove which reached to her elbow.

In the study, where the Marshal had taken Túrbin, stood bottles of different sorts of vodka, liqueurs, champagne, and *zakúska*.<sup>1</sup> The nobility, walking about or sitting in a cloud of tobacco smoke, were talking about the elections.

'When the whole worshipful society of our nobility has honoured him by their choice,' said the newly elected Captain of Police who had already imbibed freely, 'he should on no account transgress in the face of the whole society - he ought never . . .'

The count's entrance interrupted the conversation. Everybody wished to be introduced to him and the Captain of Police especially kept pressing the count's hand between his own for a long time, and repeatedly asked him not to refuse to accompany him to the new restaurant where he was going to treat the gentlemen after the ball, and where the gipsies were going to sing. The count promised to come without fail, and drank some glasses of champagne with him.

'But why are you not dancing, gentlemen?' said the count, as he was about to leave the room.

'We are not dancers,' replied the Captain of Police, laughing. 'Wine is more in our line, Count. . . . And besides, I have seen all those young ladies grow up, Count! But I can walk through an *écossaise* now and then, Count . . . I can do it, Count.'

'Then come and walk through one now,' said

<sup>1</sup> The *zakúska* ('little bite') consists of a choice of snacks: caviare, salt-fish, cheese, radishes, or what not, with small glasses of vodka or other spirits. It is sometimes served alone, but usually forms an appetizer laid out on a side table and partaken of immediately before dinner or supper. It answers somewhat to the *hors-d'œuvre* of an English dinner.

Túrbin. 'It will brighten us up before going to hear the gipsies.'

'Very well, gentlemen! Let's come and gratify our host.'

And three or four of the noblemen who had been drinking in the study since the commencement of the ball, put on gloves of black kid or knitted silk, and with red faces were just about to follow the count into the ball-room when they were stopped by the scrofulous young man who, pale and hardly able to restrain his tears, accosted Túrbin.

'You think that because you are a count you can jostle people about as if you were in the market-place,' he said, breathing with difficulty, 'but that is impolite . . .'

And again, do what he would, his quivering lips checked the flow of his words.

'What?' cried Túrbin, suddenly frowning. 'What? . . . You brat!' he cried, seizing him by the arms and squeezing them so that the blood rushed to the young man's head not so much from vexation as from fear. 'What? Do you want to fight? I am at your service!'

Hardly had Túrbin released the arms he had been squeezing so hard, than two nobles caught hold of them and dragged the young man towards the back door.

'What! Are you out of your mind? You must be tipsy! Suppose we were to tell your papa! What's the matter with you?' they said to him.

'No, I'm not tipsy, but he jostles one and does not apologize. He's a swine, that's what he is!' squealed the young man, now quite in tears.

But they did not listen to him and someone took him home.

On the other side the Captain of Police and Zavalshévski were exhorting Túrbin: 'Never mind



him, Count, he's only a child. He still gets whipped, he's only sixteen. . . . What can have happened to him? What bee has stung him? And his father such a respectable man—and our candidate.'

'Well, let him go to the devil if he does not wish . . .'

And the count returned to the ball-room and danced the *écossaise* with the pretty widow as gaily as before, laughed with all his heart as he watched the steps performed by the gentlemen who had come with him out of the study, and burst into peals of laughter that rang across the room when the Captain of Police slipped and measured his full length in the midst of the dancers.

## V

WHILE the count was in the study Anna Fédorovna had approached her brother, and supposing that she ought to pretend to be very little interested in the count began by asking:

'Who is that hussar who was dancing with me? Can you tell me, brother?'

The cavalryman explained to his sister as well as he could what a great man the hussar was, and told her at the same time that the count was only stopping in the town because his money had been stolen on the way, and that he himself had lent him a hundred rubles, but that that was not enough, so that perhaps 'sister' would lend another couple of hundred. Only Zavalshévski asked her on no account to mention the matter to anyone—especially not to the count. Anna Fédorovna promised to send her brother the money that very day and to keep the affair secret, but somehow during the *écossaise* she felt a great longing herself to offer the count as much money as he wanted. She

ok a long time making up her mind, and blushed, at last with a great effort broached the subject as follows:

'My brother tells me that a misfortune befell you in the road, Count, and that you have no money by you. If you need any, won't you take it from me? I should be so glad.'

But having said this, Anna Fedorovna suddenly felt frightened of something and blushed. All gaiety instantly left the count's face.

'Your brother is a fool!' he said abruptly. 'You know when a man insults another man they fight; but when a woman insults a man, what does he do then—do you know?'

Poor Anna Fedorovna's neck and ears grew red with confusion. She lowered her eyes and said nothing.

'He kisses the woman in public,' said the count in a low voice, leaning towards her ear. 'Allow me at least to kiss your little hand,' he added in a whisper after a prolonged silence, taking pity on his partner's confusion.

'But not now!' said Anna Fedorovna, with a deep sigh.

'When then? I am leaving early to-morrow and you owe it me.'

'Well then it's impossible,' said Anna Fedorovna with a smile.

'Only allow me a chance to meet you to-night to kiss your hand. I shall not fail to find an opportunity.'

'How can you find it?'

'That is not your business. In order to see you everything is possible. . . . It's agreed?'

'Agreed.'

The *écossaise* ended. After that they danced a mazarka and the count was quite wonderful:

catching handkerchiefs, kneeling on one knee, striking his spurs together in a quite special Warsaw manner, so that all the old people left their game of boston and flocked into the ball-room to see, and the cavalryman, their best dancer, confessed himself eclipsed. Then they had supper after which they danced the 'Grandfather', and the ball began to break up. The count never took his eyes off the little widow. It was not pretence when he said he was ready to jump through a hole in the ice for her sake. Whether it was whim, or love, or obstinacy, all his mental powers that evening were concentrated on the one desire—to meet and love her. As soon as he noticed that Anna Fedorovna was taking leave of her hostess he ran out to the footmen's room, and thence—without his fur cloak—into the courtyard to the place where the carriages stood.

'Anna Fedorovna Záyitseva's carriage!' he shouted.

A high four-seated closed carriage with lamps burning moved from its place and approached the porch.

'Stop!' he called to the coachman, and plunging knee-deep into the snow ran to the carriage.

'What do you want?' said the coachman.

'I want to get into the carriage,' replied the count opening the door and trying to get in while the carriage was moving. 'Stop, I tell you, you fool!'

'Stop, Váska!' shouted the coachman to the postilion, and pulled up the horses. 'What are you getting into other people's carriages for? This carriage belongs to my mistress, to Anna Fedorovna, and not to your honour.'

'Shut up, you blockhead! Here's a ruble for you; get down and close the door,' said the count. But as the coachman did not stir he lifted the steps himself and, lowering the window, managed some-

now to close the door. In the carriage, as in all old carriages, especially in those in which yellow galloon is used, there was a musty odour something like the smell of decayed and burnt bristles. The count's legs were wet with snow up to the knees and felt very cold in his thin boots and riding-breeches; in fact the winter cold penetrated his whole body. The coachman grumbled on the box and seemed to be preparing to get down. But the count neither heard nor felt anything. His face was aflame and his heart beat fast. In his nervous tension he seized the yellow window strap and leant out of the side window, and all his being merged into one feeling of expectation.

This expectancy did not last long. Someone called from the porch: 'Záyitseva's carriage!' The coachman shook the reins, the body of the carriage swayed on its high springs, and the illuminated windows of the house ran one after another past the carriage windows.

'Mind, fellow,' said the count to the coachman, putting his head out of the front window, 'if you tell the footman I'm here, I'll thrash you, but hold your tongue and you shall have another ten rubles.'

Hardly had he time to close the window before the body of the carriage shook more violently and then stopped. He pressed close into the corner, held his breath, and even shut his eyes, so terrified was he lest anything should balk his passionate expectation. The door opened, the carriage steps fell noisily one after the other, he heard the rustle of a woman's dress, a smell of frangipane perfume filled the musty carriage, quick little feet ran up the carriage steps, and Anna Fédorovna, brushing the count's leg with the skirt of her cloak which had come open, sank silently onto the seat beside him breathing heavily.

Whether she saw him or not no one could tell, not even Anna Fëdorovna herself, but when he took her hand and said: 'Well, now I will kiss your little hand,'<sup>1</sup> she showed very little fear, gave no reply, but yielded her arm to him, which he covered much higher than the top of her glove with kisses. The carriage started.

'Say something! Art thou angry?' he said.

She silently pressed into her corner, but suddenly something caused her to burst into tears and of her own accord she let her head fall on his breast.

## VI

THE newly elected Captain of Police and his guests the cavalryman and other nobles had long been listening to the gipsies and drinking in the new restaurant when the count, wearing a blue cloth cloak lined with bearskin which had belonged to Anna Fedorovna's late husband, joined them.

'Sure, your excellency, we have been awaiting you impatiently!' said a dark cross-eyed gipsy, showing his white teeth, as he met the count at the very entrance and rushed to help him off with his cloak. 'We have not seen you since the fair at Lebedyáni . . . Stëshka is quite pining away for you.'

Stëshka, a young, graceful little gipsy with a brick-red glow on her brown face and deep, sparkling black eyes shaded by long lashes, also ran out to meet him.

'Ah, little Count! Dearest! Jewel! This is a joy!' she murmured between her teeth, smiling merrily.

Ilyúshka himself ran out to greet him, pretending to be very glad to see him. The old women, matrons, and maids, jumped from their places and

<sup>1</sup> The same word (*ruká*) stands for hand or arm in Russian.

surrounded the guest, some claiming him as a fellow godfather, some as brother by baptism.<sup>1</sup>

Túrbin kissed all the young gipsy girls on their lips; the old women and the men kissed him on his shoulder or hand. The noblemen were also glad of their visitor's arrival, especially as the carousal, having reached its zenith, was beginning to flag, and everyone was beginning to feel satiated. The wine having lost its stimulating effect on the nerves merely weighed on the stomach. Each one had already let off his store of swagger, and they were getting tired of one another; the songs had all been sung and had got mixed in everyone's head, leaving a noisy, dissolute impression behind. No matter what strange or dashing thing anyone did, it began to occur to everyone that there was nothing agreeable or funny in it. The Captain of Police, who lay in a shocking state on the floor at the feet of an old woman, began wriggling his legs and shouting: 'Champagne! . . . The Count's come! . . . Champagne! . . . He's come . . . now then, champagne! . . . I'll have a champagne bath and bathe in it! Noble gentlemen! . . . I love the society of our brave old nobility . . . Steshka, sing *The Pathway*.'

The cavalryman was also rather tipsy, but in another way. He sat on a sofa in the corner very close to a tall handsome gipsy girl, Lyubáša; and feeling his eyes misty with drink he kept blinking and shaking his head and, repeating the same words over and over again in a whisper, besought the gipsy to fly with him somewhere. Lyubáša, smiling and listening as if what he said were very amusing and yet rather sad, glanced occasionally at her husband—the cross-eyed Sáška who was standing behind

<sup>1</sup> In Russia god-parents and their god-children, and people naving the same god-father or god-mother, were considered to be related.

the chair opposite her—and in reply to the cavalryman's declarations of love, stooped and whispering in his ear asked him to buy her some scent and ribbons on the quiet, so that the others should not notice.

'Hurrah!' cried the cavalryman when the count entered.

The handsome young man was pacing up and down the room with laboriously steady steps and a careworn expression on his face, warbling an air from *Il Seraglio*.

An elderly paterfamilias, who had been tempted by the persistent entreaties of the nobles to come and hear the gipsies, as they said that without him the thing would be worthless and it would be better not to go at all, was lying on a sofa where he had sunk as soon as he arrived, and no one was taking any notice of him. Some official or other who was also there had taken off his swallow-tail coat and was sitting up on the table, feet and all, ruffling his hair, and thereby showing that he was very much on the spree. As soon as the count entered, this official unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and got still farther onto the table. In general on Túrbin's arrival the carousal revived.

The gipsy girls, who had been wandering about the room, again gathered and sat down in a circle. The count took Stëshka, the leading singer, on his knee, and ordered more champagne.

Ilyúshka came and stood in front of Stëshka with his guitar, and the 'dance' commenced, i.e. the gipsy songs, *When you go along the Street, O Hussars!*, *Do you hear, do you know?*, and so on in a definite order. Stëshka sang admirably. The flexible sonorous contralto that flowed from her very chest, her smiles while singing, her laughing passionate eyes, and her foot that moved involuntarily in

measure with the song, her wild shriek at the commencement of the chorus—all touched some powerful but rarely-reached chord. It was evident that she lived only in the song she was singing. Ilyúshka accompanied her on the guitar—his back, legs, smile, and whole being, expressing sympathy with the song—and eagerly watching her, raised and lowered his head as attentive and engrossed as though he heard the song for the first time. Then at the last melodious note he suddenly drew himself up, and as if feeling himself superior to everyone in the world, proudly and resolutely threw up his guitar with his foot, twirled it about, stamped, tossed back his hair, and looked round at the choir with a frown. His whole body from neck to heels began dancing in every muscle—and twenty energetic, powerful voices each trying to chime in more strongly and more strangely than the rest, rang through the air. The old women bobbed up and down on their chairs waving their handkerchiefs, showing their teeth, and vying with one another in their harmonious and measured shouts. The basses with strained necks and heads bent to one side boomed while standing behind the chairs.

When Steshka took a high note Ilyúshka brought his guitar closer to her as if wishing to help her, and the handsome young man screamed with rapture, saying that now they were beginning the *bémols*.<sup>1</sup>

When a dance was struck up and Dunyáša, advancing with quivering shoulders and bosom, twirled round in front of the count and glided onwards, Túrbín leapt up, threw off his jacket, and in his red shirt stepped jauntily with her in precise and measured step, accomplishing such things with

<sup>1</sup> *Bémol* is French for a flat; but in Russia many people knowing nothing of musical technicalities imagined it to have something to do with excellence in music.



his legs that the gipsies smiled with approval and glanced at one another.

The Captain of Police sat down like a Turk, beat his breast with his fist, and cried 'vivat!' and then, having caught hold of the count's leg, began to tell him that of two thousand rubles he now had only five hundred left, but that he could do anything he liked if only the count would allow it. The elderly paterfamilias awoke and wished to go away, but was not allowed to do so. The handsome young man began persuading a gipsy to waltz with him. The cavalryman, wishing to show off his intimacy with the count, rose and embraced Túrbin. 'Ah, my dear fellow,' he said, 'why didst thou leave us, eh?' The count was silent, evidently thinking of something else. 'Where did you go to? Ah, you rogue of a count, I know where you went to!'

For some reason this familiarity displeased Túrbin. Without a smile he looked silently into the cavalryman's face and suddenly launched at him such terrible and rude abuse that the cavalryman was pained, and for a while could not make up his mind whether to take the offence as a joke or seriously. At last he decided to take it as a joke, smiled, and went back to his gipsy, assuring her that he would certainly marry her after Easter. They sang another song and another, danced again, and 'hailed the guests', and everyone continued to imagine that he was enjoying it. There was no end to the champagne. The count drank a great deal. His eyes seemed to grow moist, but he was not unsteady. He danced even better than before, spoke firmly, even joined in the chorus extremely well, and chimed in when Stëshka sang *Friendship's Tender Emotions*. In the midst of a dance the landlord came in to ask the guests to return to their homes as it was getting on for three in the morning.

The count seized the landlord by the scruff of his neck and ordered him to dance the Russian dance. The landlord refused. The count snatched up a bottle of champagne and having stood the landlord on his head and had him held in that position, amidst general laughter, slowly emptied the bottle over him.

It was beginning to dawn. Everyone looked pale and exhausted except the count.

'Well, I must be starting for Moscow,' said he, suddenly rising. 'Come along, all of you! Come and see me off' . . . and we'll have some tea together.'

All agreed except the paterfamilias (who was left behind asleep), and crowding into three large sledges that stood at the door, they all drove off to the hotel.

## VII

'GET horses ready!' cried the count as he entered the saloon of his hotel followed by the guests and gipsies. 'Sáshka! —not gipsy Sáshka but my Sáshka —tell the superintendent I'll thrash him if he gives me bad horses. And get us some tea. Zavalshévski, look after the tea: I'm going to have a look at Ilyín and see how he's getting on . . .' added Túrbín, and went along the passage towards the uhlan's room.

Ilyín had just finished playing, and having lost his last kopék was lying face downwards on the sofa, pulling one hair after another from its torn horse-hair cover, putting them in his mouth, biting them in two and spitting them out again.

Two tallow candles, one of which had burnt down to the paper in the socket, stood on the card-strewn table and feebly wrestled with the morning light that crept in through the window. There were

no ideas in Ilyín's head: a dense mist of gambling passion shrouded all his faculties, he did not even feel penitent. He made one attempt to think of what he should do now: how being penniless he could get away, how he could repay the fifteen thousand rubles of Crown money, what his regimental commander would say, what his mother and his comrades would say, and he felt such terror and disgust with himself that wishing to forget himself he rose and began pacing up and down the room trying to step only where the floor-boards joined, and began, once more, vividly to recall every slightest detail of the course of play. He vividly imagined how he had begun to win back his money, how he withdrew a nine and placed the king of spades over two thousand rubles. A queen was dealt to the right, an ace to the left, then the king of diamonds to the right and all was lost; but if, say, a six had been dealt to the right and the king of diamonds to the left, he would have won everything back, would have played once more double or quits, would have won fifteen thousand rubles, and would then have bought himself an ambler from his regimental commander and another pair of horses besides, and a phaeton. Well, and what then?—Well it would have been a splendid, splendid thing!

And he lay down on the sofa again and began chewing the horse-hair.

'Why are they singing in No. 7?' thought he. 'There must be a spree on at Túrbin's. Shall I go in and have a good drink?'

At this moment the count entered.

'Well, old fellow, cleaned out, are you? Eh?' cried he.

'I'll pretend to be asleep,' thought Ilyín, 'or else I shall have to speak to him, and I want to sleep.'

Túrbin, however, came up and stroked his head.

'Well, my dear friend, cleaned out—lost everything? Tell me.'

Ilyín gave no answer.

The count pulled his arm.

'I have lost. But what is that to you?' muttered Ilyín in a sleepy, indifferent, discontented voice, without changing his position.

'Everything?'

'Well—yes. What of it? Everything. What is it to you?'

'Listen. Tell me the truth as to a comrade,' said the count, inclined to tenderness by the influence of the wine he had drunk and continuing to stroke Ilyín's hair. 'I have really taken a liking to you. Tell me the truth. If you have lost Crown money I'll get you out of your scrape: it will soon be too late. . . . Had you Crown money?'

Ilyín jumped up from the sofa.

'Well then, if you wish me to tell you, don't speak to me, because . . . please don't speak to me. . . . To shoot myself is the only thing!' said Ilyín, with real despair, and his head fell on his hands and he burst into tears, though but a moment before he had been calmly thinking about amblers.

'What pretty girlishness! Where's the man who has not done the like? It's not such a calamity; perhaps we can mend it. Wait for me here.'

The count left the room.

'Where is Squire Lúkhnov's room?' he asked the boots.

The boots offered to show him the way. In spite of the valet's remark that his master had only just returned and was undressing, the count went in. Lúkhnov was sitting at a table in his dressing-gown counting several packets of paper money that lay before him. A bottle of Rhine wine, of which

he was very fond, stood on the table. After winning he permitted himself that pleasure. Lúkhnov looked coldly and sternly through his spectacles at the count as though not recognizing him.

'You don't recognize me, I think?' said the count, resolutely stepping up to the table.

Lúkhnov made a gesture of recognition, and said: 'What is it you want?'

'I should like to play with you,' said Túrbin, sitting down on the sofa.

'Now?'

'Yes.'

'Another time with pleasure, Count! But now I am tired and am going to bed. Won't you have a glass of wine? It is famous wine.'

'But I want to play a little—now.'

'I don't intend to play any more to-night. Perhaps some of the other gentlemen will, but I won't. You must please excuse me, Count.'

'Then you won't?'

Lúkhnov shrugged his shoulders to express his regret at his inability to comply with the count's desire.

'Not on any account?'

The same shrug.

'But I particularly request it. . . . Well, will you play?'

Silence.

'Will you play?' the count asked again. 'Mind!'

The same silence and a rapid glance over the spectacles at the count's face which was beginning to frown.

'Will you play?' shouted the count very loud, striking the table with his hand so that the bottle toppled over and the wine was spilt. 'You know you did not win fairly. . . . Will you play? I ask you for the third time.'

'I said I would not. This is really strange, Count! And it is not at all proper to come and hold a knife to a man's throat,' remarked Lúkhnov, not raising his eyes. A momentary silence followed during which the count's face grew paler and paler. Suddenly a terrible blow on the head stupefied Lúkhnov. He fell on the sofa trying to seize the money and uttered such a piercingly despairing cry as no one could have expected from so calm and imposing a person. Túrbin gathered up what money lay on the table, pushed aside the servant who ran in to his master's assistance, and left the room with rapid strides.

'If you want satisfaction I am at your service! I shall be in my room for another half-hour,' said the count, returning to Lúkhnov's door.

'Thief! Robber! I'll have the law of you . . . was all that was audible from the room.

Ilvín, who had paid no attention to the count's promise to help him, still lay as before on the sofa in his room choking with tears of despair. Consciousness of what had really happened, which the count's caresses and sympathy had evoked from behind the strange tangle of feelings, thoughts, and memories filling his soul, did not leave him. His youth, rich with hope, his honour, the respect of society, his dreams of love and friendship—all were utterly lost. The source of his tears began to run dry, a too passive feeling of hopelessness overcame him more and more, and thoughts of suicide, no longer arousing revulsion or horror, claimed his attention with increasing frequency. Just then the count's firm footsteps were heard.

In Túrbin's face traces of anger could still be seen, his hands shook a little, but his eyes beamed with kindly merriment and self-satisfaction.

'Here you are, it's won back!' he said, throwing

several bundles of paper money on the table. 'See if it's all there and then make haste and come into the saloon. I am just leaving,' he added, as though not noticing the joy and gratitude and extreme agitation on Ilyśn's face, and whistling a gipsy song he left the room.

### VIII

SÁSHKA, with a sash tied round his waist, announced that the horses were ready, but insisted that the count's cloak, which, he said, with its fur collar was worth three hundred rubles, should be recovered, and the shabby blue one returned to the rascal who had changed it for the count's at the Marshal's; but Túrbín told him there was no need to look for the cloak, and went to his room to change his clothes.

The cavalryman kept hiccoughing as he sat silent beside his gipsy girl. The Captain of Police called for vodka, and invited everyone to come at once and have breakfast with him, promising that his wife would certainly dance with the gipsies. The handsome young man was profoundly explaining to Ilyúshka that there is more soufulness in piano-forte music, and that it is not possible to play *bémols* on a guitar. The official sat in a corner sadly drinking his tea, and in the daylight seemed ashamed of his debauchery. The gipsies were disputing among themselves in their own tongue as to 'hailing the guests' again, which Stëshka opposed, saying that the *baroráy* (in gipsy language count or prince or, more literally, 'great gentleman') would be angry. In general the last embers of the debauch were dying down in everyone.

'Well, one farewell song, and then off home!' said the count, entering the parlour in travelling dress, fresh, merry, and handsomer than ever.

The gipsies again formed their circle and were just ready to begin when Ilyín entered with a packet of paper money in his hand and took the count aside.

'I only had fifteen thousand rubles of Crown money and you have given me sixteen thousand three hundred,' he said, 'so this is yours.'

'That's a good thing. Give it here!'

Ilyín gave him the money and, looking timidly at the count, opened his lips to say something, but only blushed till tears came into his eyes and seizing the count's hand began to press it.

'You be off! . . . Ilyúshka! Listen! Here's some money for you, but you must accompany me out of the town with songs!' and he threw onto the guitar the thirteen hundred rubles Ilyín had brought him. But the count quite forgot to repay the hundred rubles he had borrowed of the cavalryman the day before.

It was already ten o'clock in the morning. The sun had risen above the roofs of the houses. People were moving about in the streets. The tradesmen had long since opened their shops. Noblemen and officials were driving through the streets and ladies were shopping in the bazaar, when the whole gipsy band, with the Captain of Police, the cavalryman, the handsome young man, Ilyín, and the count in the blue bearskin cloak, came out into the hotel porch.

It was a sunny day and a thaw had set in. The large post-sledges, each drawn by three horses with their tails tied up tight, drove up to the porch splashing through the mud and the whole lively party took their places. The count, Ilyín, Steshka, and Ilyúshka, with Sashka the count's orderly, got into the first sledge. Blucher was beside himself, and wagged his tail, barking at the shaft-horse. The other gentlemen got into the two other sledges



with the rest of the gipsy men and women. The tróykas got abreast as they left the hotel and the gipsies struck up in chorus.

The tróykas with their songs and bells—forcing every vehicle they met right onto the pavements—dashed through the whole town right to the town gates.

The tradesmen and passers-by who did not know them, and especially those who did, were not a little astonished when they saw the noblemen driving through the streets in broad daylight with gipsy girls and tipsy gipsy men, singing.

When they had passed the town gates the tróykas stopped and everyone began bidding the count farewell.

Ilyín, who had drunk a good deal at the leave-taking and had himself been driving the sledge all the way, suddenly became very sad, begged the count to stay another day, and when he found that this was not possible, rushed quite unexpectedly at his new friend, kissed him and promised with tears to try to exchange into the hussar regiment the count was serving in as soon as he got back. The count was particularly gay; he tumbled the cavalryman, who had become very familiar in the morning, into a snowdrift; set Blücher at the Captain of Police, took Stëshka in his arms and wished to carry her off to Moscow, and finally jumped into his sledge and made Blücher, who wanted to stand up in the middle, sit down by his side. Sáška jumped on the box after having again asked the cavalryman to recover the count's cloak from *them*, and to send it on. The count cried, 'Go!', took off his cap, waved it over his head, and whistled to the horses like a post-boy. The tróykas drove off in their different directions.

A monotonous snow-covered plain stretched far

in front with a dirty yellowish road winding through it. The bright sunshine—playfully sparkling on the thawing snow which was coated with a transparent crust of ice—was pleasantly warm to one's face and back. Steam rose thickly from the sweating horses. The bell tinkled merrily. A peasant, with a loaded sledge that kept gliding to the side of the road, got hurriedly out of the way, jerking his rope reins and plashing with his wet bast shoes as he ran along the thawing road. A fat red-faced peasant woman, with a baby wrapped in the bosom of her sheepskin cloak, sat in another laden sledge, urging on a thin-tailed, jaded white horse with the ends of the reins. The count suddenly thought of Anna Fedorovna.

'Turn back!' he shouted.

The driver did not at once understand.

'Turn back! Back to town! Be quick!'

The tróyka passed the town gates once more, and drove briskly up to the wooden porch of Anna Fedorovna's house. The count ran quickly up the steps, passed through the vestibule and the drawing-room, and having found the widow still asleep, took her in his arms, lifted her out of bed, kissed her sleepy eyes, and ran quickly back. Anna Fedorovna, only half awake, licked her lips and asked, 'What has happened?' The count jumped into his sledge, shouted to the driver, and with no further delay and without even a thought of Lúkhnov, or the widow, or Stëshka, but only of what awaited him in Moscow, left the town of K—— for ever.

## IX

MORE than twenty years had gone by. Much water had flowed away, many people had died, many been born, many had grown up or grown old; still more ideas had been born and had died, much that was

old and beautiful and much that was old and bad had perished; much that was beautiful and new had grown up and still more that was immature, monstrous, and new, had come into God's world.

Count Fedor Túrbín had been killed long ago in a duel by some foreigner he had horse-whipped in the street. His son, physically as like him as one drop of water to another, was a handsome young man already twenty-three years old and serving in the Horse Guards. But morally the young Túrbín did not in the least resemble his father. There was not a shade of the impetuous, passionate and, to speak frankly, depraved propensities of the past age. Together with his intelligence, culture, and the gifted nature he had inherited a love of propriety and the comforts of life; a practical way of looking at men and affairs, reasonableness and prudence were his distinguishing characteristics. The young count had got on well in the service and at twenty-three was already a lieutenant. At the commencement of the war he made up his mind that he would be more likely to secure promotion if he exchanged into the active army, and so he entered an hussar regiment as captain and was soon in command of a squadron.

In May 1848<sup>1</sup> the S—— hussar regiment was marching to the campaign through the province of K——, and the very squadron young Count Túrbín commanded had to spend the night in the village of Morózovka, Anna Fedorovna's estate.

Anna Fedorovna was still living, but was already so far from young that she did not even consider herself young, which means a good deal for a

<sup>1</sup> Tolstóy seems here to antedate Russia's intervention in the Hungarian insurrection. The Russian army did not enter Hungary till May 1849 and the war lasted till the end of September that year.

woman. She had grown very fat, which is said to make a woman look younger, but deep soft wrinkles were apparent on her white plumpness. She never went to town now, it was an effort for her even to get into her carriage, but she was still just as kind-hearted and as silly as ever (now that her beauty no longer biases one, the truth may be told). With her lived her twenty-three year old daughter Lisa, a Russian country belle, and her brother—our acquaintance the cavalryman—who had good-naturedly squandered the whole of his small fortune and had found a home for his old age with Anna Fedorovna. His hair was quite grey and his upper lip had fallen in, but the moustache above it was still carefully blackened. His back was bent, and not only his forehead and cheeks but even his nose and neck were wrinkled, yet in the movements of his feeble crooked legs the manner of a cavalryman was still perceptible.

The family and household sat in the small drawing-room of the old house, with an open door leading out onto the verandah, and open windows overlooking the ancient star-shaped garden with its lime trees. Grey-haired Anna Fedorovna, wearing a lilac jacket, sat on the sofa laying out cards on a round mahogany table. Her old brother in his clean white trousers and a blue coat had settled himself by the window and was plaiting a cord out of white cotton with the aid of a wooden fork—a pastime his niece had taught him and which he liked very much, as he could no longer do anything and his eyes were too weak for newspaper reading, his favourite occupation. Pimochka, Anna Fedorovna's ward, sat by him learning a lesson—Lisa helping her and at the same time making a goat's-wool stocking for her uncle with wooden knitting needles. The last rays of the setting sun, as usual at

that hour, shone through the lime-tree avenue and threw slanting gleams on the farthest window and the what-not standing near it. It was so quiet in the garden and the room that one could hear the swift flutter of a swallow's wings outside the window, and Anna Fedorovna's soft sigh or the old man's slight groan as he crossed his legs.

'How do they go? Show me, Lisa! I always forget,' said Anna Fedorovna, at a standstill in laying out her cards for patience.

Without stopping her work Lisa went to her mother and glanced at the cards:

'Ah, you've muddled them all, mamma dear!' she said, rearranging them. 'That's the way they should go. And what you are trying your fortune about will still come true,' she added, withdrawing a card so that it was not noticed.

'Ah yes, you always deceive me and say it has come out.'

'No really, it means . . . you'll succeed. It has come out.'

'All right, all right, you sly puss! But isn't it time we had tea?'

'I have ordered the samovar to be lit. I'll see to it at once. Do you want to have it here? . . . Be quick and finish your lesson, Pimochka, and let's have a run.'

And Lisa went to the door.

'Lisa, Lizzie!' said her uncle, looking intently at his fork. 'I think I've dropped a stitch again—pick it up for me, there's a dear.'

'Directly, directly! But I must give out a loaf of sugar to be broken up.'

And really, three minutes later she ran back, went to her uncle and pinched his ear.

'That's for dropping your stitches!' she said laughing, 'and you haven't done your task!'

'Well, well, never mind, never mind. Put it right—there's a little knot or something.'

Lisa took the fork, drew a pin out of her tippet—which thereupon the breeze coming in at the door blew slightly open—and managing somehow to pick up the stitch with the pin, pulled two loops through, and returned the fork to her uncle.

'Now give me a kiss for it,' she said, holding out her rosy cheek to him and pinning up her tippet. 'You shall have rum with your tea to-day. It's Friday, you know.'

And she again went into the tea-room.

'Come here and look, uncle, the hussars are coming!' she called from there in her clear voice.

Anna Fedorovna came with her brother into the tea-room, the windows of which overlooked the village, to see the hussars. Very little was visible from the windows—only a crowd moving in a cloud of dust.

'It's a pity we have so little room, sister, and that the wing is not yet finished,' said the old man to Anna Fedorovna. 'We might have invited the officers. Hussar officers are such splendid, gay young fellows, you know. It would have been good to see something of them.'

'Why of course, I should have been only too glad, brother; but you know yourself we have no room. There's my bedroom, Lisa's room, the drawing-room, and this room of yours, and that's all. Really now, where could we put them? The village elder's hut has been cleaned up for them: Michael Matvéev says it's quite clean now.'

'And we could have chosen a bridegroom for you from among them, Lizzie—a fine hussar!'

'I don't want an hussar; I'd rather have an uhlan. Weren't you in the uhlands, uncle? . . . I don't want to have anything to do with these

hussars. They are all said to be desperate fellows.' And Lisa blushed a little but again laughed her musical laugh.

'Here comes Ustyúshka running; we must ask her what she has seen,' she added.

Anna Fëdorovna told her to call Ustyúshka.

'It's not in you to keep to your work, you must needs run off to see the soldiers,' said Anna Fëdorovna. 'Well, where have the officers put up?'

'In Erómkin's house, mistress. There are two of them, such handsome ones. One's a count, they say.'

'And what's his name?'

'Kazárov or Turbínov. . . . I'm sorry—I've forgotten.'

'What a fool; can't so much as tell us anything. You might at least have found out the name.'

'Well, I'll run back.'

'Yes, I know you're first-rate at that sort of thing. . . . No, let Daniel go. Tell him to go and ask whether the officers want anything, brother. One ought to show them some politeness after all. Say the mistress sent to inquire.'

The old people again sat down in the tea-room and Lisa went to the servants' room to put into a box the sugar that had been broken up. Ustyúshka was there telling about the hussars.

'Darling miss, what a handsome man that count is!' she said. 'A regular cherubim with black eyebrows. There now, if you had a bridegroom like that you would be a couple of the right sort.'

The other maids smiled approvingly; the old nurse sighed as she sat knitting at a window and even whispered a prayer, drawing in her breath.

'So you liked the hussars very much?' said Lisa. 'And you're a good one at telling what you've seen.' Go, please, and bring some of the cranberry juice,

Ustyúshka, to give the hussars something sour to drink.'

And Lisa, laughing, went out with the sugar basin in her hands.

'I should really like to have seen what that hussar is like,' she thought, 'brown or fair? And he would have been glad to make our acquaintance I should think. . . . And if he goes away he'll never know that I was here and thought about him. And how many such have already passed me by? Who sees me here except uncle and Ustyúshka? Whichever way I do my hair, whatever sleeves I put on, no one looks at me with pleasure,' she thought with a sigh as she looked at her plump white arm. 'I suppose he is tall, with large eyes, and certainly small black moustaches. . . . Here am I, more than twenty-two, and no one has fallen in love with me except pock-marked Iván Ipátich, and four years ago I was even prettier. . . . And so my girlhood has passed without gladdening anyone. Oh, poor, poor country lass that I am!'

Her mother's voice, calling her to pour out tea, roused the country lass from this momentary meditation. She lifted her head with a start and went into the tea-room.

The best results are often obtained accidentally, and the more one tries the worse things turn out. In the country, people rarely try to educate their children and therefore unwittingly usually give them an excellent education. This was particularly so in Lisa's case. Anna Fedorovna, with her limited intellect and careless temperament, gave Lisa no education—did not teach her music or that very useful French language—but having accidentally borne a healthy pretty child by her deceased husband she gave her little daughter over to a wet-nurse and a drv-nurse, fed her, dressed her in



cotton prints and goat-skin shoes, sent her out, to walk and gather mushrooms and wild berries, engaged a student from the seminary to teach her reading, writing, and arithmetic, and when sixteen years had passed she casually found in Lisa a friend, an ever-kind-hearted, ever-cheerful soul, and an active housekeeper. Anna Fedorovna, being kind-hearted, always had some children to bring up—either serf children or foundlings. Lisa began looking after them when she was ten years old: teaching them, dressing them, taking them to church, and checking them when they played too many pranks. Later on the decrepit kindly uncle, who had to be tended like a child, appeared on the scene. Then the servants and peasants came to the young lady with various requests and with their ailments, which latter she treated with elderberry, peppermint, and camphorated spirits. Then there was the household management which all fell on her shoulders of itself. Then an unsatisfied longing for love awoke and found its outlet only in Nature and religion. And Lisa accidentally grew into an active, good-natured, cheerful, self-reliant, pure, and deeply religious woman. It is true that she suffered a little from vanity when she saw neighbours standing by her in church wearing fashionable bonnets brought from K——, and sometimes she was vexed to tears by her old mother's whims and grumbling. She had dreams of love, too, in most absurd and sometimes crude forms, but these were dispersed by her useful activity which had grown into a necessity, and at the age of twenty-two there was not one spot or sting of remorse in the clear calm soul of the physically and morally beautifully developed maiden. Lisa was of medium height, plump rather than thin, her eyes were hazel, not large, and had slight shadows on the lower lids, and she had a long

light-brown plait of hair. She walked with big steps and with a slight sway—a 'duck's waddle' as the saying is. Her face, when she was occupied and not agitated by anything in particular, seemed to say to everyone who looked into it: 'It is a joy to live in the world when one has someone to love and a clear conscience.' Even in moments of vexation, perplexity, alarm, or sorrow, in spite of herself there shone—through the tear in her eye, her frowning left eyebrow and her compressed lips—a kind straightforward spirit unspoilt by the intellect; it shone in the dimples of her cheeks, in the corners of her mouth, and in her beaming eyes accustomed to smile and to rejoice in life.

## X

THE air was still hot though the sun was setting when the squadron entered Morózovka. In front of them along the dusty village street trotted a windled cow separated from its herd, looking round and now and then stopping and lowing, but never suspecting that all she had to do was to turn aside. The peasants—old men, women, and children, and the servants from the manor-house, crowded on both sides of the street and eagerly watched the hussars as the latter rode through a thick cloud of dust, turning their horses which occasionally stamped and snorted. On the right of the squadron were two officers who sat their fine black horses carelessly. One was Count Túrbin, the commander, the other a very young man recently promoted from cadet, whose name was Pólozov.

An hussar in a white linen jacket came out of the west of the huts, raised his cap, and went up to the officers.

'Where are the quarters assigned us?'

‘For your Excellency?’ answered the quarter-master-sergeant, with a start of his whole body. ‘The village elder’s hut has been cleaned out. I wanted to get quarters at the manor-house, but they say there is no room there. The proprietress is such a vixen.’

‘All right!’ said the count, dismounting and stretching his legs as he reached the village elder’s hut. ‘And has my phaeton arrived?’

‘It has deigned to arrive, your Excellency!’ answered the quartermaster-sergeant, pointing with his cap to the leather body of a carriage visible through the gateway, and rushing forward to the entrance of the hut, which was thronged with members of the peasant family collected to look at the officer. He even pushed one old woman over as he briskly opened the door of the freshly cleaned hut and stepped aside to let the count pass.

The hut was fairly large and roomy but not very clean. The German valet, dressed like a gentleman, stood inside sorting the linen in a portmanteau after having set up an iron bedstead and made the bed.

‘Tough, what filthy lodgings!’ said the count with vexation. ‘Couldn’t you have found anything better at some gentleman’s house, Dyádenko?’

‘If your Excellency desires it I will try at the manor-house,’ answered the quarter-master-sergeant, ‘but it isn’t up to much—doesn’t look much better than a hut.’

‘Never mind now. Go away.’

And the count lay down on the bed and threw his arms behind his head.

‘Johann!’ he called to his valet. ‘You’ve made a lump in the middle again! How is it you can’t make a bed properly?’

Johann came up to put it right.

'No, never mind now. But where is my dressing-gown?' said the count in a dissatisfied tone.

The valet handed him the dressing-gown. Before putting it on the count examined the front.

'I thought so, that spot is not cleaned off. Could anyone be a worse servant than you?' he added, pulling the dressing-gown out of the valet's hands and putting it on. 'Tell me, do you do it on purpose? . . . Is the tea ready?'

'I have not had time,' said Johann.

'Fool!'

After that the count took up the French novel placed ready for him and read for some time in silence: Johann went out into the passage to prepare the samovar. The count was obviously in a bad temper, probably caused by fatigue, a dusty face, tight clothing, and an empty stomach.

'Johann!' he cried again, 'bring me the account for those ten rubles. What did you buy in the town?'

He looked over the account handed him, and made some dissatisfied remarks about the dearness of the things purchased.

'Serve rum with my tea.'

'I didn't buy any rum,' said Johann.

'That's good! . . . How many times have I told you to have rum?'

'I hadn't enough money.'

'Then why didn't Pólozov buy some? You should have got some from his man.'

'Cornet Pólozov? I don't know. He bought the tea and the sugar.'

'Idiot! . . . Get out! . . . You are the only man who knows how to make me lose my patience. . . . You know that on a march I always have rum with my tea.'

'Here are two letters for you from the staff,' said the valet.

The count opened his letters and began reading them without rising. The cornet, having quartered the squadron, came in with a merry face.

'Well, how is it, Túrbin? It seems very nice here. But I must confess I'm tired. It was hot.'

'Very nice! . . . A filthy stinking hut, and thanks to your lordship no rum; your blockhead didn't buy any, nor did this one. You might at least have mentioned it.'

And he continued to read his letter. When he had finished he rolled it into a ball and threw it on the floor.

In the passage the cornet was meanwhile saying to his orderly in a whisper: 'Why didn't you buy any rum? You had money enough, you know.'

'But why should we buy everything? As it is I pay for everything, while his German does nothing but smoke his pipe.'

It was evident that the count's second letter was not unpleasant, for he smiled as he read it.

'Who is it from?' asked Pólozov, returning to the room and beginning to arrange a sleeping-place for himself on some boards by the oven.

'From Mina,' answered the count gaily, handing him the letter. 'Do you want to see it? What a delightful woman she is! . . . Really she's much better than our young ladies. . . . Just see how much feeling and wit there is in that letter. Only one thing is bad--she's asking for money.'

'Yes, that's bad,' said the cornet.

'It's true I promised her some, but then this campaign came on, and besides. . . . However if I remain in command of the squadron another three months I'll send her some. It's worth it, really; such a charming creature, eh?' said he, watching the expression on Pólozov's face as he read the letter.

'Dreadfully ungrammatical, but very nice, and it seems as if she really loves you,' said the cornet.

'H'm . . . I should think so! It's only women of that kind who love sincerely when once they do love.'

'And who was the other letter from?' asked the cornet, handing back the one he had read.

'Oh, that . . . there's a man, a nasty beast who won from me at cards, and he's reminding me of it for the third time. . . . I can't let him have it at present. . . . A stupid letter!' said the count, evidently vexed at the recollection.

After this both officers were silent for a while. The cornet, who was evidently under the count's influence, glanced now and then at the handsome though clouded countenance of Túrbin—who was looking fixedly through the window—and drank his tea in silence, not venturing to start a conversation.

'But d'you know, it may turn out capitally,' said the count, suddenly turning to Pólozov with a shake of his head. 'Supposing we get promotions by seniority this year, and take part in an action besides, I may get ahead of my own captains in the Guards.'

The conversation was still on the same topic and they were drinking their second tumblers of tea, when old Daniel entered and delivered Anna Fedorovna's message.

'And I was also to inquire if you are not Count Fëdor Iványch Túrbin's son?' added Daniel on his own account, having learnt the count's name and remembering the deceased count's sojourn in the town of K—. 'Our mistress, Anna Fëdorovna, was very well acquainted with him.'

'He was my father. And tell your mistress I am very much obliged to her. We want nothing, but say we told you to ask whether we could not have

a cleaner room somewhere—in the manor-house, or anywhere.'

'Now, why did you do that?' asked Pólozov when Daniel had gone. 'What does it matter? Just for one night—what does it matter? And they will be inconveniencing themselves.'

'What an idea! I think we've had our share of smoky huts! . . . It's easy to see you're not a practical man. Why not seize the opportunity when we can, and live like human beings for at least one night? And on the contrary they will be very pleased to have us. . . . The worst of it is, if this lady really knew my father . . . ' continued the count with a smile which displayed his glistening white teeth. 'I always have to feel ashamed of my departed papa. There is always some scandalous story or other, or some debt he has left. That is why I hate meeting these acquaintances of my father's. However that was the way in those days,' he added, growing serious.

'Did I ever tell you,' said Pólozov, 'I once met an uhlan brigade-commander, Ilyín? He was very anxious to meet you. He is awfully fond of your father.'

'That Ilyín is an awful good-for-nothing, I believe. But the worst of it is that these good people, who assure me that they knew my father in order to make my acquaintance, while pretending to be very pleasant, relate such tales about my father as make me ashamed to listen. It is true—I don't deceive myself, but look at things dispassionately—that he had too ardent a nature and sometimes did things that were not nice. However that was the way in those times. In our days he might have turned out a very successful man, for to do him justice he had extraordinary capacities.'

A quarter of an hour later the servant came back

with a request from the proprietress that they would be so good as to spend the night at her house.

## XI

HAVING heard that the hussar officer was the son of Count Fedor Túrbín, Anna Fedorovna was all in a flutter.

'Oh, dear me! The darling boy! . . . Daniel, run quickly and say your mistress asks them to her house!' she began, jumping up and hurrying with quick steps to the servants' room. 'Lizzie! Ust-yushka! . . . Your room must be got ready, Lisa, you can move into your uncle's room. And you, brother, you won't mind sleeping in the drawing-room, will you? It's only for one night.'

'I don't mind, sister. I can sleep on the floor.'

'He must be handsome if he's like his father. Only to have a look at him, the darling. . . . You must have a good look at him, Lisa! The father *was* handsome. . . . Where are you taking that table to? Leave it here,' said Anna Fedorovna, bustling about. 'Bring two beds—take one from the foreman's—and get the crystal candlestick, the one my brother gave me on my birthday—it's on the what-not—and put a stearine candle in it.'

At last everything was ready. In spite of her mother's interference Lisa arranged the room for the two officers her own way. She took out clean bed-clothes scented with mignonette, made the beds, had candles and a bottle of water placed on a small table near by, fumigated the servants' room with scented paper, and moved her own little bed into her uncle's room. Anna Fedorovna quieted down a little, settled in her own place, and even took up the cards again, but instead of laying them out she leaned her plump elbow on the table and grew thoughtful.



'Ah, time, time, how it flies!' she whispered to herself. 'Is it so long ago? It is as if I could see him now. Ah, he was a madcap! . . .' and tears came into her eyes. 'And now there's Lizzie . . . but still, she's not what I was at her age—she's a nice girl but she's not like that . . .'

'Lisa, you should put on your *mousseline-de-laine* dress for the evening.'

'Why, mother, you are not going to ask them in to see us? Better not,' said Lisa, unable to master her excitement at the thought of meeting the officers: 'Better not, mamma!'

And really her desire to see them was less strong than her fear of the agitating joy she imagined awaited her.

'Maybe they themselves will wish to make our acquaintance, Lizzie!' said Anna Fedorovna, stroking her head and thinking: 'No, her hair is not what mine was at her age. . . . Oh, Lizzie, how I should like you to. . . .' And she really did very earnestly desire something for her daughter. But she could not imagine a marriage with the count, and she could not desire for her daughter relations such as she had had with the father; but still she did desire something very much. She may have longed to relive in the soul of her daughter what she had experienced with him who was dead.

The old cavalryman was also somewhat excited by the arrival of the count. He locked himself into his room and emerged a quarter of an hour later in a Hungarian jacket and pale-blue trousers, and entered the room prepared for the visitors with the bashfully pleased expression of a girl who puts on a ball-dress for the first time in her life.

'I'll have a look at the hussars of to-day, sister! The late count was indeed a true hussar. I'll see! I'll see!'

The officers had already reached the room assigned to them through the back entrance.

"There, you see! Isn't this better than that hut with the cockroaches?" said the count, lying down as he was, in his dusty boots, on the bed that had been prepared for him.

'Of course it's better; but still, to be indebted to the proprietress . . .'

'Oh, what nonsense! One must be practical in all things. They're awfully pleased, I'm sure . . . Eh, you there!' he cried. 'Ask for something to hang over this window, or it will be draughty in the night.'

At this moment the old man came in to make the officers' acquaintance. Of course, though he did it with a slight blush, he did not omit to say that he and the old count had been comrades, that he had enjoyed the count's favour, and he even added that he had more than once been under obligations to the deceased. What obligations he referred to, whether it was the count's omission to repay the hundred rubles he had borrowed, or his throwing him into a snow-heap, or swearing at him, the old man quite omitted to explain. The young count was very polite to the old cavalryman and thanked him for the night's lodging.

'You must excuse us if it is not luxurious, Count,' (he very nearly said 'your Excellency', so unaccustomed had he become to conversing with important persons), 'my sister's house is so small. But we'll hang something up there directly and it will be all right,' added the old man, and on the plea of seeing about a curtain, but mainly because he was in a hurry to give an account of the officers, he bowed and left the room.

‡ The pretty Ustyúshka came in with her mistress's shawl to cover the window, and besides, the mistress

had told her to ask if the gentlemen would not like some tea.

The pleasant surroundings seemed to have a good influence on the count's spirits. He smiled merrily, joked with Ustyúshka in such a way that she even called him a scamp, asked whether her young lady was pretty, and in answer to her question whether they would have any tea he said she might bring them some tea, but the chief thing was that, their own supper not being ready yet, perhaps they might have some vodka and something to eat, and some sherry if there was any.

The uncle was in raptures over the young count's politeness, and praised the new generation of officers to the skies, saying that the present men were incomparably superior to the former generation.

Anna Fëdorovna did not agree—no one could be superior to Count Fedor Iványch Túrbín—and at last she grew seriously angry and drily remarked, 'The one who has last stroked you, brother, is always the best . . . . Of course people are cleverer nowadays, but Count Fedor Iványch danced the *écossaise* in such a way and was so amiable that everybody lost their heads about him, though he paid attention to no one but me. So you see, there were good people in the old days too.'

Here came the news of the demand for vodka, light refreshments, and sherry.

'There now, brother, you never do the right thing; you should have ordered supper,' began Anna Fëdorovna. 'Lisa, see to it, dear!'

Lisa ran to the larder to get some pickled mushrooms and fresh butter, and the cook was ordered to make rissoles.

'But how about sherry? Have you any left, brother?'

'No, sister, I never had any.'

'How's that? Why, what is it you take with your sea?'

'That's rum, Anna Fedorovna.'

'Isn't it all the same? Give them some of that—it's all the same. But wouldn't it after all be best to ask them in here, brother? You know all about it—I don't think they would take offence.'

The cavalryman declared he would warrant that the count was too good-natured to refuse and that he would certainly fetch them. Anna Fedorovna went and put on a silk dress and a new cap for some reason, but Lisa was so busy that she had no time to change her pink gingham dress with the wide sleeves. Besides, she was terribly excited; she felt as if something wonderful was awaiting her and as if a low black cloud hung over her soul. It seemed to her that this handsome hussar count must be a perfectly new, incomprehensible, but beautiful being. His character, his habits, his speech, must all be so unusual, so different from anything she had ever met. All he thinks or says must be wise and right, all he does must be honourable, his whole appearance must be beautiful. She never doubted that. Had he asked not merely for refreshments and sherry, but for a bath of sage-brandy and perfume, she would not have been surprised and would not have blamed him, but would have been firmly convinced that it was right and necessary.

The count at once agreed when the cavalryman informed them of his sister's wish. He brushed his hair, put on his uniform, and took his cigar-case.

'Come along,' he said to Pólozov.

'Really it would be better not to go,' answered the cornet. '*Ils feront des frais pour nous recevoir.*'<sup>1</sup>

'Nonsense, they will be only too happy! Besides,

<sup>1</sup> They will be putting themselves to expense on our account.

I have made some inquiries: there is a pretty daughter. . . . Come along!' said the count, speaking in French.

*'Je vous en prie, messieurs!'*<sup>1</sup> said the cavalryman, merely to make the officers feel that he also knew French and had understood what they had said.

## XII

LISA, afraid to look at the officers, blushed and cast down her eyes and pretended to be busy filling the teapot when they entered the room. Anna Fëdorovna on the contrary jumped up hurriedly, bowed, and not taking her eyes off the count, began talking to him—now saying how unusually like his father he was, now introducing her daughter to him, now offering him tea, jam, or home-made sweetmeats. No one paid any attention to the cornet because of his modest appearance, and he was very glad of it, for he was, as far as propriety allowed, gazing at Lisa and minutely examining her beauty which evidently took him by surprise. The uncle, listening to his sister's conversation with the count, awaited, with the words ready on his lips, an opportunity to narrate his cavalry reminiscences. During tea the count lit a cigar and Lisa found it difficult to prevent herself from coughing. He was very talkative and amiable, at first slipping his stories into the intervals of Anna Fëdorovna's ever-flowing speech, but at last monopolizing the conversation. One thing struck his hearers as strange; in his stories he often used words not considered improper in the society he belonged to, but which here sounded rather too bold and somewhat frightened Anna Fëdorovna and made Lisa blush to her ears; but the count did not notice it and remained calmly natural and amiable.

<sup>1</sup> If you please, gentlemen.

Lisa silently filled the tumblers, which she did not give into the visitors' hands but placed on the table near them, not having quite recovered from her excitement, and she listened eagerly to the count's remarks. His stories, which were not very deep, and the hesitation in his speech gradually calmed her. She did not hear from him the very clever things she had expected, nor did she see that elegance in everything which she had vaguely expected to find in him. At the third glass of tea, after her bashful eyes had once met his and he had not looked down but had continued to look at her too quietly and with a slight smile, she even felt rather inimically disposed towards him, and soon found that not only was there nothing especial about him but that he was in no wise different from other people she had met, that there was no need to be afraid of him though his nails were long and clean, and that there was not even any special beauty in him. Lisa suddenly relinquished her dream, not without some inward pain, and grew calmer, and only the gaze of the taciturn cornet which she felt fixed upon her, disquieted her.

'Perhaps it's not this one, but that one!' she thought.

### XIII

AFTER tea the old lady asked the visitors into the drawing-room and again sat down in her old place.

'But wouldn't you like to rest, Count?' she asked, and after receiving an answer in the negative continued: 'What can I do to entertain our dear guests? Do you play cards, Count? There now, brother, you should arrange something; arrange a set—'

'But you yourself play *préférence*,' answered the

[<sup>1</sup> In *préférence* partners play together as in whist. There is a method of scoring 'with tables' which increases the gains and

avalryman. 'Why not all play? Will you play, count? And you too?'

The officers expressed their readiness to do whatever their kind hosts desired.

Lisa brought her old pack of cards which she used for divining when her mother's swollen face would get well, whether her uncle would return the same day when he went to town, whether a neighbour would call to-day, and so on. These cards, though she had used them for a couple of months, were cleaner than those Anna Fëdorovna used to tell fortunes.

'But perhaps you won't play for small stakes?' inquired the uncle. 'Anna Fëdorovna and I play for half-kopeks. . . . And even so she wins all our money.'

'Oh, any stakes you like—I shall be delighted,' replied the count.

'Well then, one kopek "assignats"<sup>1</sup> just for once, in honour of our dear visitors! Let them beat me, an old woman!' said Anna Fëdorovna, settling

losses of the players. The players compete in declaring the number of tricks the cards they hold will enable them to make. The highest bidder decides which suit is to be trumps and has to make the number of tricks he has declared, or be fined. A player declaring *misère* undertakes to make no tricks, and is fined (puts on a *remise*) for each trick he or she takes. 'Ace and king blank' means that a player holds the two highest cards and no others of a given suit.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of this story two currencies were in use simultaneously—the depreciated 'assignats' and the 'silver rubles', which like the 'assignats' were usually paper. The assignats had been introduced in Russia in 1768 and by the end of the Napoleonic wars were much depreciated. The fluctuated till 1811, when a new 'silver ruble' was introduced the value of which was about 38 pence. Paper 'silver rubles' were exchangeable for coin at par, and it was decreed that the assignats would be redeemed at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  assignats for one 'silver ruble'. In out-of-the-way provincial districts the assignats were still in general use.

down in her arm-chair and arranging her mantilla. 'And perhaps I'll win a ruble or so from them,' thought she, having developed a slight passion for cards in her old age.

'If you like, I'll teach you to play with "tables" and "*misère*",' said the count. 'It is capital.'

Everyone liked the new Petersburg way. The uncle was even sure he knew it; it was just the same as 'boston' used to be, only he had forgotten it a bit. But Anna Fedorovna could not understand it at all, and failed to understand it for so long that at last, with a smile and a nod of approval, she felt herself obliged to assert that now she understood it and that all was quite clear to her. There was not a little laughter during the game when Anna Fedorovna, holding ace and king blank, declared *misère*, and was left with six tricks. She even became confused and began to smile shyly and hurriedly explain that she had not got quite used to the new way. But they scored against her all the same, especially as the count, being used to playing a careful game for high stakes, was cautious, skilfully played through his opponents' hands, and refused to understand the shoves the cornet gave him under the table with his foot, or the mistakes the latter made when they were partners.

Lisa brought more sweets, three kinds of jam, and some specially prepared apples that had been kept since last season, and stood behind her mother's back watching the game and occasionally looking at the officers and especially at the count's white hands with their rosy well-kept nails, which threw the cards and took up the tricks in so practised, assured, and elegant a manner.

Again Anna Fedorovna, rather irritably outbidding the others, declared seven tricks, made only four, and was fined accordingly, and having very



clumsily noted down, on her brother's demand, the points she had lost, became quite confused and fluttered.

'Never mind, mamma, you'll win it back!' smilingly remarked Lisa, wishing to help her mother out of the ridiculous situation. 'Let uncle make a forfeit, and then he'll be caught.'

'If you would only help me, Lisa dear!' said Anna Fëdorovna, with a frightened glance at her daughter. 'I don't know how this is . . .'

'But I don't know this way either,' Lisa answered, mentally reckoning up her mother's losses. 'You will lose a lot that way, mamma! There will be nothing left for Pimochka's new dress,' she added in jest.

'Yes, this way one may easily lose ten silver rubles,' said the cornet looking at Lisa and anxious to enter into conversation with her.

'Aren't we playing for "assignats"?' said Anna Fëdorovna, looking round at them all.

'I don't know how we are playing, but I can't reckon in "assignats",' said the count. 'What is it? I mean, what are "assignats"?''

'Why, nowadays nobody counts in "assignats" any longer,' remarked the uncle who had played very cautiously and had been winning.

The old lady ordered some sparkling home-made wine to be brought, drank two glasses, became very red, and seemed to resign herself to any fate. A lock of her grey hair escaped from under her cap and she did not even put it right. No doubt it seemed to her as if she had lost millions and it was all up with her. The cornet touched the count with his foot more and more often. The count scored down the old lady's losses. At last the game ended, and in spite of Anna Fëdorovna's wicked attempt to add to her score by pretending to make

akes in adding it up, in spite of her horror at amount of her losses, it turned out at last that had lost 920 points. "That's nine "assignats"?" asked several times, and did not comprehend full extent of her loss until her brother told , to her horror, that she had lost more than ty-two 'assignats' and that she must certainly

The count did not even add up his winnings, but immediately the game was over, went over the window at which Lisa was arranging the *zakúshka* and turning pickled mushrooms out of a jar into a plate for supper, and there quite quietly and imply did what the cornet had all that evening so longed, but failed, to do—entered into conversation with her about the weather.

Meanwhile the cornet was in a very unpleasant position. In the absence of the count, and more specially of Lisa, who had been keeping her in good humour, Anna Fedorovna became frankly ngry.

'Really, it's too bad that we should win from you like this,' said Pólozov in order to say something. 'It is a real shame!'

'Well, of course, if you go and invent some kind of "tables" and "*misères*" and I don't know how to play them. . . . Well then, how much does it come to in "assignats"?' she asked.

'Thirty-two rubles, thirty-two and a quarter,' repeated the cavalryman who under the influence of his success was in a playful mood. 'Hand over the money, sister; pay up!'

'I'll pay it all, but you won't catch me again. No! . . . I shall not win this back as long as I live.'

And Anna Fedorovna went off to her room, hurriedly swaying from side to side, and came back bringing nine 'assignats'. It was only on the old

man's insistent demand that she eventually paid the whole amount.

Pólozov was seized with fear lest Anna Fëdorovna should scold him if he spoke to her. He silently and quietly left her and joined the count and Lisa who were talking at the open window.

On the table spread for supper stood two tallow candles. Now and then the soft fresh breath of the May night caused the flames to flicker. Outside the window, which opened onto the garden, it was also light but it was a quite different light. The moon, which was almost full and already losing its golden tinge, floated above the tops of the tall lindens and more and more lit up the thin white clouds which veiled it at intervals. Frogs were croaking loudly by the pond, the surface of which, silvered in one place by the moon, was visible through the avenue. Some little birds fluttered slightly or lightly hopped from bough to bough in a sweet-scented lilac-bush whose dewy branches occasionally swayed gently close to the window.

'What wonderful weather!' the count said as he approached Lisa and sat down on the low window-sill. 'I suppose you walk a good deal?'

'Yes,' said Lisa, not feeling the least shyness in speaking with the count. 'In the morning about seven o'clock I look after what has to be attended to on the estate and take my mother's ward, Pfmochka, with me for a walk.'

'It is pleasant to live in the country!' said the count, putting his eye-glass to his eye and looking now at the garden now at Lisa. 'And don't you ever go out at night, by moonlight?'

'No. But two years ago uncle and I used to walk every moonlight night. He was troubled with a strange complaint—insomnia. When there was a full moon he could not fall asleep. His little room—

that one—looks straight out into the garden, the window is low but the moon shines straight into it.'

'That's strange: I thought that was your room,' said the count.

'No, I only sleep there to-night. You have my room.'

'Is it possible? Dear me, I shall never forgive myself for having disturbed you in such a way!' said the count letting the monocle fall from his eye in proof of the sincerity of his feelings. 'If I had known that I was troubling you . . .'

'It's no trouble! On the contrary I am very glad: uncle's is such a charming room, so bright, and the window is so low. I shall sit there till I fall asleep, or else I shall climb out into the garden and walk about a bit before going to bed.'

'What a splendid girl!' thought the count, replacing his eyeglass and looking at her and trying to touch her foot with his own while pretending to seat himself more comfortably on the window-sill. 'And how cleverly she has let me know that I may see her in the garden at the window if I like!' Lisa even lost much of her charm in his eyes—the conquest seemed so easy.

'And how delightful it must be,' he said, looking thoughtfully at the dark avenue of trees, 'to spend a night like this in the garden with a beloved one.'

Lisa was embarrassed by these words and by the repeated, seemingly accidental, touch of his foot. Anxious to hide her confusion she said without thinking: 'Yes, it is nice to walk in the moonlight.' She was beginning to feel rather uncomfortable. She had tied up the jar out of which she had taken the mushrooms, and was going away from the window, when the cornet joined them and she felt wish to see what kind of man he was.

'What a lovely night!' he said.

'Why, they talk of nothing but the weather,' thought Lisa.

'What a wonderful view!' continued the cornet. 'But I suppose you are tired of it,' he added, having a curious propensity to say rather unpleasant things to people he liked very much.

'Why do you think so? The same kind of food or the same dress one may get tired of, but not of a beautiful garden if one is fond of walking—especially when the moon is still higher. From uncle's window the whole pond can be seen. I shall look at it to-night.'

'But I don't think you have any nightingales?' said the count, much dissatisfied that the cornet had come and prevented his ascertaining more definitely the terms of the rendezvous.

'No, but there always were until last year when some sportsman caught one, and this year one began to sing beautifully only last week but the police-officer came here and his carriage-bells frightened it away. Two years ago uncle and I used to sit in the covered alley and listen to them for two hours or more at a time.'

'What is this chatterbox telling you?' said her uncle coming up to them. 'Won't you come and have something to eat?'

After supper, during which the count by praising the food and by his appetite had somewhat dispelled the hostess's ill humour, the officers said good-night and went into their room. The count shook hands with the uncle and to Anna Fedorovna's surprise shook her hand also without kissing it, and even shook Lisa's looking straight into her eyes the while and slightly smiling his pleasant smile. This look again abashed the girl.

'He is very good-looking,' she thought, 'but he thinks too much of himself.'

## XIV

'I SAY, aren't you ashamed of yourself?' said Pólozov when they were in their room. 'I purposely tried to lose, and kept touching you under the table. Aren't you ashamed? The old lady was quite upset, you know.'

The count laughed very heartily.

'She was awfully funny, that old lady. . . . How offended she was! . . .'

And he again began laughing so merrily that even Johann, who stood in front of him, cast down his eyes and turned away with a slight smile.

'And with the son of a friend of the family! Ha-ha-ha! . . .'

 the count continued to laugh.

'No, really it was too bad. I was quite sorry for her,' said the cornet.

'What nonsense! How young you still are! Why, did you wish me to lose? Why should one lose? I used to lose before I knew how to play! Ten rubles may come in useful, my dear fellow. You must look at life practically or you'll always be left in the lurch.'

Pólozov was silenced; besides, he wished to be quiet and to think about Lisa who seemed to him an unusually pure and beautiful creature. He undressed and lay down in the soft clean bed prepared for him.

'What nonsense all this military honour and glory is!' he thought, looking at the window curtained by the shawl through which the white moonbeams stole in. 'It would be happiness to live in a quiet nook with a dear, wise, simple-hearted wife—yes, that is true and lasting happiness!'

\* But for some reason he did not communicate these reflections to his friend and did not even refer

to the country lass, though he was convinced that the count too was thinking of her.

'Why don't you undress?' he asked the count who was walking up and down the room.

'I don't feel sleepy yet, somehow. You can put out the candle if you like. I shall lie down as I am.'

And he continued to pace up and down.

'Don't feel sleepy yet somehow,' repeated Pólozov, who after this last evening felt more dissatisfied than ever with the count's influence over him and was inclined to rebel against it. 'I can imagine,' he thought, addressing himself mentally to Túrbin, 'what is now passing through that well-brushed head of yours! I saw how you admired her. But you are not capable of understanding such a simple honest creature: you want a Mina and a colonel's epaulettes. . . . I really must ask him how he liked her.'

And Pólozov turned towards him—but changed his mind. He felt he would not be able to hold his own with the count, if the latter's opinion of Lisa were what he supposed it to be, and that he would even be unable to avoid agreeing with him so accustomed was he to bow to the count's influence, which he felt more and more every day to be oppressive and unjust.

'Where are you going?' he asked, when the count put on his cap and went to the door.

'I'm going to see if things are all right in the stables.'

'Strange!' thought the cornet, but put out the candle and turned over on his other side, trying to drive away the absurdly jealous and hostile thoughts that crowded into his head concerning his former friend.

Anna Fëdorovna meanwhile, having as usual

kissed her brother, daughter, and ward, and made the sign of the cross over each of them, had also retired to her room. It was long since the old lady had experienced so many strong impressions in one day and she could not even pray quietly: she could not rid herself of the sad and vivid memories of the deceased count and of the young dandy who had plundered her so unmercifully. However she undressed as usual, drank half a tumbler of *kvas*<sup>1</sup> that stood ready for her on a little table by her bed, and lay down. Her favourite cat crept softly into the room. Anna Fédorovna called her up and began to stroke her and listened to her purring, but could not fall asleep.

'It's the cat that keeps me awake,' she thought and drove her away. The cat fell softly on the floor and gently moving her bushy tail leapt onto the stove. And now the maid, who always slept in Anna Fédorovna's room, came and spread the piece of felt that served her for a mattress, put out the candle, and lit the lamp before the icon. At last the maid began to snore, but still sleep would not come to soothe Anna Fédorovna's excited imagination. When she closed her eyes the hussar's face appeared to her, and she seemed to see it in the room in various guises when she opened her eyes and by the dim light of the lamp looked at the chest of drawers, the table, or a white dress that was hanging up. Now she felt very hot on the feather bed, now her watch ticked unbearably on the little table, and the maid snored unendurably through her nose. She woke her up and told her not to snore. Again thoughts of her daughter, of the old count and the young one, and of the *préférence*, became curiously mixed in her head. Now she saw

<sup>1</sup> *Kvas* is a non-intoxicating drink usually made from rye-malt and rye-flour.



14 herself waltzing with the old count, saw her own  
tc round white shoulders, felt someone's kisses on  
th them, and then saw her daughter in the arms of the  
young count. Ustyúshka again began to snore.

“No, people are not the same nowadays. The  
w other one was ready to leap into the fire for me—  
o and not without cause. But this one is sleeping like  
a fool, no fear, glad to have won—no love-making  
about him. . . . How the other one said on his  
v knees, “What do you wish me to do? I’ll kill myself  
e on the spot, or do anything you like!” And he  
i would have killed himself had I told him to.”

1 Suddenly she heard a patter of bare feet in the  
passage and Lisa, with a shawl thrown over her,  
ran in pale and trembling and almost fell onto her  
mother’s bed.

After saying good-night to her mother that  
evening Lisa had gone alone to the room her uncle  
generally slept in. She put on a white dressing-  
jacket and covering her long thick plait with a  
kerchief, extinguished the candle, opened the  
window, and sat down on a chair, drawing her feet  
up and fixing her pensive eyes on the pond now all  
glittering in the silvery light.

All her accustomed occupations and interests  
suddenly appeared to her in a new light: her  
capricious old mother, uncritical love for whom had  
become part of her soul; her decrepit but amiable  
old uncle; the domestic and village serfs who  
worshipped their young mistress; the milch cows and  
the calves, and all this Nature which had died and  
been renewed so many times and amid which she  
had grown up loving and beloved—all this that had  
given such light and pleasant tranquillity to her soul  
suddenly seemed unsatisfactory; it seemed dull and  
unnecessary. It was as if someone had said to her:

'Little fool, little fool, for twenty years you have been trifling, serving someone without knowing why, and without knowing what life and happiness are!' As she gazed into the depths of the moonlit, motionless garden she thought this more intensely, far more intensely, than ever before. And what caused these thoughts? Not any sudden love for the count as one might have supposed. On the contrary she did not like him. She could have been interested in the cornet more easily, but he was plain, poor fellow, and silent. She kept involuntarily forgetting him and recalling the image of the count with anger and annoyance. 'No, that's not it,' she said to herself. Her ideal had been so beautiful. It was an ideal that could have been loved on such a night amid this Nature without impairing its beauty—an ideal never abridged to fit it to some coarse reality.

Formerly, solitude and the absence of anyone who might have attracted her attention had caused the power of love, which Providence has given impartially to each of us, to rest intact and tranquil in her bosom, and now she had lived too long in the melancholy happiness of feeling within her the presence of this something, and of now and again opening the secret chalice of her heart to contemplate its riches, to be able to lavish its contents thoughtlessly on anyone. God grant she may enjoy to her grave this chary bliss! Who knows whether it be not the best and strongest, and whether it is not the only true and possible happiness?

'O Lord my God,' she thought, 'can it be that I have lost my youth and happiness in vain and that it will never be . . . never be? Can that be true?' And she looked into the depths of the sky lit up by the moon and covered by light fleecy clouds that, veiling the stars, crept nearer to the moon. 'If that highest white cloudlet touches the moon it will be

a sign that it is true,' thought she. The mist-like smoky strip ran across the bottom half of the bright disk and little by little the light on the grass, on the tops of the limes, and on the pond, grew dimmer and the black shadows of the trees grew less distinct. As if to harmonize with the gloomy shadows that spread over the world outside, a light wind ran through the leaves and brought to the window the odour of dewy leaves, of moist earth, and of blooming lilacs.

'But it is not true,' she consoled herself. 'There now, if the nightingale sings to-night it will be a sign that what I'm thinking is all nonsense, and that I need not despair,' thought she. And she sat a long while in silence waiting for something, while again all became bright and full of life and again and again the cloudlets ran across the moon making everything dim. She was beginning to fall asleep as she sat by the window, when the quivering trills of a nightingale came ringing from below across the pond and awoke her. The country maiden opened her eyes. And once more her soul was renewed with fresh joy by its mysterious union with Nature which spread out so calmly and brightly before her. She leant on both arms. A sweet, languid sensation of sadness oppressed her heart, and tears of pure wide-spreading love, thirsting to be satisfied—good comforting tears—filled her eyes. She folded her arms on the window-sill and laid her head on them. Her favourite prayer rose to her mind and she fell asleep with her eyes still moist.

The touch of someone's hand aroused her. She awoke. But the touch was light and pleasant. The hand pressed hers more closely. Suddenly she became alive to reality, screamed, jumped up, and trying to persuade herself that she had not recognized the count who was standing under the

window bathed in the moonlight, she ran out of the room. . . .

## XV

AND it really was the count. When he heard the girl's cry and a husky sound from the watchman behind the fence, who had been roused by that cry, he rushed headlong across the wet dewy grass into the depths of the garden feeling like a detected thief. 'Fool that I am!' he repeated unconsciously, 'I frightened her. I ought to have roused her gently by speaking to her. Awkward brute that I am!' He stopped and listened: the watchman came into the garden through the gateway, dragging his stick along the sandy path. It was necessary to hide and the count went down by the pond. The frogs made him start as they plumped from beneath his feet into the water. Though his boots were wet through, he squatted down and began to recall all he had done: how he had climbed the fence, looked for her window, and at last espied a white shadow; how, listening to the faintest rustle, he had several times approached the window and gone back again: how at one moment he felt sure she was waiting, vexed at his tardiness, and the next, that it was impossible she should so readily have agreed to a rendezvous: how at last, persuading himself that it was only the bashfulness of a country-bred girl that made her pretend to be asleep, he went up resolutely and distinctly saw how she sat, but then for some reason ran away again and only after severely taunting himself for cowardice boldly drew near to her and touched her hand.

The watchman again made a husky sound and the gate creaked as he left the garden. The girl's window was slammed to and a shutter fastened from inside. This was very provoking. The count would

have given a good deal for a chance to begin all over again; he would not have acted so stupidly now. . . . 'And she is a wonderful girl—so fresh—quite charming! And I have let her slip through my fingers. . . . Awkward fool that I am!' He did not want to sleep now and went at random, with the firm tread of one who has been crossed, along the covered lime-tree avenue.

And here the night brought to him also its peaceful gifts of soothing sadness and the need of love. The straight pale beams of the moon threw spots of light through the thick foliage of the limes onto the clay path, where a few blades of grass grew, or a dead branch lay here and there. The light falling on one side of a bent bough made it seem as if covered with white moss. The silvered leaves whispered now and then. There were no lights in the house and all was silent; the voice of the nightingale alone seemed to fill the bright, still, limitless space. 'O God, what a night! What a wonderful night!' thought the count, inhaling the fragrant freshness of the garden. 'Yet I feel a kind of regret—as if I were discontented with myself and with others, discontented with life generally. A splendid, sweet girl! Perhaps she was really hurt. . . .' Here his dreams became mixed: he imagined himself in this garden with the country-bred girl in various extraordinary situations. Then the role of the girl was taken by his beloved Mina. 'Eh, what a fool I was! I ought simply to have caught her round the waist and kissed her.' And regretting that he had not done so, the count returned to his room.

The cornet was still awake. He at once turned in his bed and faced the count.

'Not asleep yet?' asked the count.

'No.'

'Shall I tell you what has happened?'

'Well?'

'No, I'd better not, or . . . all right, I'll tell you—draw in your legs.'

And the count having mentally abandoned the intrigue that had miscarried, sat down on his comrade's bed with an animated smile.

'Would you believe it, that young lady gave me a rendezvous!'

'What are you saying?' cried Pólozov, jumping out of bed.

'No, but listen.'

'But how? When? It's impossible!'

'Why, while you were adding up after we had played *préférence*, she told me she would sit at the window in the night and that one could get in at the window. There, you see what it is to be practical! While you were calculating with the old woman, I arranged that little matter. Why, you heard her say in your presence that she would sit by the window to-night and look at the pond.'

'Yes, but she didn't mean anything of the kind.'

'Well, that's just what I can't make out: did she say it intentionally or not? Maybe she didn't really wish to agree so suddenly, but it looked very like it. It turned out horribly. I quite played the fool,' he added, smiling contemptuously at himself.

'What do you mean? Where have you been?'

The count, omitting his manifold irresolute approaches, related everything as it had happened.

'I spoilt it myself: I ought to have been bolder. She screamed and ran from the window.'

'So she screamed and ran away,' said the cornet, smiling uneasily in answer to the count's smile, which for such a long time had had so strong an influence over him.

'Yes, but it's time to go to sleep.'

The cornet again turned his back to the door and lay silent for about ten minutes. Heaven knows what went on in his soul, but when he turned again, his face bore an expression of suffering and resolve.

‘Count Túrbin!’ he said abruptly.

‘Are you delirious?’ quietly replied the count. ‘. . . What is it, Cornet Pólozov?’

‘Count Túrbin, you are a scoundrel!’ cried Pólozov, and again jumped out of bed.

## XVI

THE squadron left next day. The two officers did not see their hosts again and did not bid them farewell. Neither did they speak to one another. They intended to fight a duel at the first halting-place. But Captain Schulz, a good comrade and splendid horseman, beloved by everyone in the regiment and chosen by the count to act as his second, managed to settle the affair so well that not only did they not fight but no one in the regiment knew anything about the matter, and Túrbin and Pólozov, though no longer on the old friendly footing, still continued to speak in familiar terms to one another and to meet at dinners and card-parties.

## A LANDLORD'S MORNING



## TWO HUSSARS

## A LANDLORD'S MORNING

(*Part of an unfinished novel A Russian Landlord, 1852*)

### CHAPTER I

PRINCE NEKHLYÚDOV was nineteen years old when, at the end of his Third Course at the University, he came to his estate for the summer vacation and spent the whole summer there by himself. That autumn, in his unformed boyish hand, he wrote the following letter to his aunt, Countess Belorétski, whom he considered to be his best friend and the cleverest woman in the world. It was in French, and ran as follows:

'My dear Aunt,

'I have made a resolution which will affect my destiny for life. I am leaving the university to devote myself to life on my estate, because I feel that I was born for it. For heaven's sake, dear Aunt, don't laugh at me. You will say that I am young; perhaps I really am still a child, but that does not prevent me from feeling my vocation—from wishing to do good, and from loving goodness.

'As I wrote you before, I found affairs here in indescribable disorder. Wishing to put them in order and understand them, I discovered that the chief evil lies in the very pitiable and impoverished condition of the peasants, and that this is an evil that can be remedied only by work and patience. If you could only see two of my peasants, David and Iván, and the way they and their families live, I am sure that the mere sight of those two unfortunates would do more to convince you than anything I can say to explain my intention. Is it not my sacred and direct duty to care for the welfare of these seven hundred men for whom I must be responsible to God? Would it not be a sin, for

the sake of pleasure or ambition, to abandon them to the caprice of harsh elders and stewards? And why should I seek other opportunities of being useful and doing good, when such a noble, brilliant, and immediate duty lies at hand? I feel that I am capable of being a good landlord; and to be so, as I understand the word, one needs neither university diplomas nor official rank, such as you desire for me. Dear Aunt, don't make ambitious plans for me; accustom yourself to the thought that I have chosen quite a special path, but a good one which I feel will yield me happiness. I have thought much, very much, about my future duties, and have written down rules of conduct for myself; and if God only grants me life and strength, I shall succeed in my undertaking.

'Don't show my brother Vása this letter: I am afraid of his ridicule. He is accustomed to domineer over me and I am accustomed to submit to him. Ványa even if he does not approve of my intentions will at least understand them.'

The countess answered with the following letter, which is here also translated from the French:

'Your letter, my dear Dmítri, proved nothing to me except that you have an admirable heart, of which I was always convinced. But, my dear boy, our good qualities do us more harm in life than our bad ones. I must not tell you that you are doing a foolish thing and that your action grieves me; I will try to influence you only by persuasion. Let us consider the matter, my dear. You say you feel a vocation for country life, that you wish to make your serfs happy, and hope to be a good proprietor. I must tell you: first, that we feel our vocation only after we have once mistaken it: secondly, that it is easier to make oneself happy than others, and thirdly, that to be a good landlord one must be a

cold and austere man, which you will scarcely be, though you may try to make believe that you are.

'You think your arguments irrefutable and even accept them as rules for the conduct of life, but at my age, my dear, one does not believe in arguments and rules but only in experience; and experience tells me that your plans are childish. I am getting on for fifty and have known many fine men, but have never heard of a young man of good family and ability burying himself in the country in order to do good. You always wished to appear original, but your originality is really nothing but excessive self-esteem. Believe me, my dear, it is better to choose the trodden paths. They lead more easily to success, and success, even if you don't want it for yourself, is indispensable to enable you to do the good you desire.

'The poverty of some peasants is an unavoidable evil or one which can be remedied without forgetting all your obligations to society, to your relations, and to yourself. With your intelligence, your heart, and your love of goodness, there is no career in which you would not obtain success; but choose at any rate one worthy of you and which will bring you honour.

'I believe in your sincerity when you say you are free from ambition, but you are deceiving yourself. At your age and with your capacity ambition is a virtue, though it becomes a defect and a vulgarity when a man is no longer able to satisfy that passion, and you will experience this if you do not change your intention.

'Goodbye, dear Dmítri. It seems to me that I love you more than ever for your absurd, but noble and magnanimous plan. Do as you think best, but I confess that I cannot agree with you.'

Having received this letter the young man considered it for a long time, and at last, having come to the conclusion that even the cleverest woman may make mistakes, sent in his petition for discharge from the university, and settled down on his estate.

## CHAPTER II

THE young landowner, as he had written to his aunt, had drawn up rules for his estate management and for his life in general, and had allotted his hours, days, and months to different occupations. Sundays were fixed for receiving petitioners—the domestic and other serfs—for visiting the allotments of the poorest peasants and giving them assistance with the assent of the village Commune (the *mir*) which met each Sunday evening and decided how much help should be distributed and to whom.

More than a year had passed in such activities and the young man was no longer quite a novice either in practical or theoretical knowledge of estate management.

It was a bright Sunday in June when Nekhlyúdov, having drunk his coffee and glanced through a chapter of *Maison Rustique*, put a note-book and a packet of ruble notes in the pocket of his light overcoat, and started out from the large wooden house with its colonnades and verandas, in which he occupied one small room downstairs, and went along the unswept weed-grown paths of the old English garden, towards the village which lay along both sides of the high road. Nekhlyúdov was a tall well-knit young man, with a mass of thick curly brown hair, a bright sparkle in his dark eyes, a fresh complexion, and rosy lips above which the first down of young manhood was just appearing. Youthful strength, energy, and good-natured self-

satisfaction were apparent in his gait and every movement. The peasants, dressed in their Sunday best, were returning from church in motley groups—old men, maidens, children, and women with babies in their arms—and dispersing into their homes, bowing low to the master and stepping out of his way. After going some way along the street Nekhlyúdob stopped, took out his note-book, and looked at the last page, on which in his unformed hand he had written the names of several peasants, with comments: 'Iván Chúris asks for props', he read, and went up to the gate of the second hut on his right.

The Chúris' domicile consisted of a half-rotten log building, mouldy at the corners, sloping to one side, and so sunk in the ground that a small, broken sash window, with its shutter half torn off, and a still smaller casement window stopped up with tow, were only just above the manure heap. Attached to the principal hut were a boarded passage with a low door and a rotten threshold, another small building, still older, and even lower than the passage, a gate, and a wattled shed. All this had once been covered by one irregular roof, but the thick, black, rotting thatch now hung only over the eaves, so that in places the rafters and laths were visible. In the front of the yard was a well with dilapidated sides and the remains of a post and pulley, and a dirty cattle-trampled puddle in which ducks were splashing. Near the well stood two ancient willows that were split and had scanty pale-green shoots. Under one of these willows, which witnessed to the fact that there had been a time when someone had cared to beautify the place, sat a fair-haired little girl, about eight years old, making a two-year-old baby girl crawl round her. A puppy playing beside them, seeing Nekhlyúdob,

rushed headlong under the gate and burst into frightened, quivering barking.

'Is Iván at home?' asked Nekhlyúdob.

The elder girl seemed petrified by the question and opened her eyes wider and wider without answering. The younger one opened her mouth and prepared to cry. A little, old-looking woman in a tattered check gown with an old red girdle tied low down, looked out from behind the door, but did not answer either. Nekhlyúdob went up to the door and repeated his question.

'He is, master,' said the old woman in a tremulous voice, bowing low and growing more and more frightened and agitated.

When Nekhlyúdob, having greeted her, passed through the passage into the narrow yard, the old woman went up to the door and, resting her chin on her hand and not taking her eyes off the master, began slowly to shake her head.

The yard was a wretched place. Here and there lay old blackened manure left after carting, and on this lay in disorder a rotting block, a pitchfork, and two harrows. The penthouse round the yard had almost no thatch left on the roof, and one side had fallen in so that the rafters no longer lay on the fork-posts but on the manure. On the other side stood a wooden plough, a cart lacking a wheel, and a heap of empty, useless beehives piled one on another. Chúris, with the edge and head of his axe, was getting the wattle wall clear from the roof which had crushed it. Iván Chúris was a peasant of about fifty, below the average height. His tanned, oval face, surrounded by a dark brown beard streaked with grey and thick hair of the same colour, was handsome and expressive. His dark blue half-closed eyes were intelligent and carelessly good-natured, and when he smiled his small regular

mouth, sharply defined under his scanty brown moustache, expressed calm self-confidence and a certain ironical indifference to his surroundings. The coarseness of his skin, his deep wrinkles, the sharply marked sinews of his neck, face, and arms, the unnatural stoop of his shoulders, and his crooked bandy legs, showed that his life had been spent in labour beyond his strength. He wore thick white hempen trousers patched with blue on the knees, a dirty shirt of the same material torn at the back and arms, and a low girdle of tape, from which hung a brass key.

'Good-day', said Nekhlyúdob as he entered the yard.

Chúris looked round and then continued his work, and only when he had cleared the wattle from under the roof by an energetic effort did he stick his axe into a log, adjust his girdle, and come out into the middle of the yard.

'A pleasant holiday, your honour!' he said, bowing low and then shaking back his hair.

'Thank you, friend. You see I've come to look at your allotment,' said Nekhlyúdob, looking at the peasant's garb with boyish friendliness and timidity. 'Let me see why you want those props you asked me for at the meeting of the Commune.'

'The props? Why, you know what props are for, your honour! I'd like to prop things up a bit: there, please see for yourself. Only the other day this corner fell in—but thank God the cattle were not inside at the time. Things hardly hold together,' said Chúris, looking contemptuously at his unthatched, crooked, and dilapidated sheds. 'The rafters, gable-ends, and cross-pieces now, if you only touch them you won't find a single piece of timber that's any use. And where's a man to get timber from nowadays—you know yourself.'



'Then what use would five props be to you, when one shed has fallen in and the others will soon do so? You don't need props, but new rafters, cross-pieces, and uprights,' said the master, evidently parading his knowledge of the subject.

Chúris was silent.

'So what you need is timber and not props. You should have said so.'

'Of course I want timber, but there's nowhere to get it. It won't do to keep going to the master's house! If the likes of us were allowed to get into the habit of coming to your honour's house for everything we need, what sort of serfs should we be? But if you will be merciful concerning the oak posts that are lying unused on your threshing-floor,' he added, bowing and shifting from foot to foot, 'I might be able to change some of the pieces, cut away others, and fix things up somehow with the old stuff.'

'With the old stuff? Don't you yourself say that it's all old and rotten? To-day this corner falls in, to-morrow that, the day after a third: so if you are to do anything you must rebuild it altogether that the work may not be wasted. Tell me, do you think your place could stand through this winter or not?'

'Who can tell?'

'But what do you think? Will it fall in or not?'

Chúris considered.

'It will all fall in,' he said suddenly.

'There, you see you should have said at the meeting that you need to rebuild the whole homestead, and not only put in a few props. You know I should be glad to help you . . .'

'We're very grateful for your favour,' Chúris replied suspiciously, and without looking at the master. 'If you would only favour me with four

'ms and some props I could perhaps fix things myself; and the rotten wood I'd take out and use for supports in the hut.'

'Then is your hut in a bad state too?'

'My old woman and I are expecting from day to day that it will crush someone,' Chúris remarked indifferently. 'The other day she did get crushed by a strut from the ceiling.'

'Crushed? What do you mean?'

'Why, your honour, it hit her on the back so that she lay more dead than alive till night-time.'

'Well, and has she recovered?'

'Yes, she's recovered, but she's always ailing. It's true that she's been sickly since her birth.'

'What, are you ill?' Nekhlyúdob asked the woman who was still standing in the doorway and had begun groaning as soon as her husband mentioned her.

'Just here it never leaves me,' she said, pointing to her dirty emaciated chest.

'Again!' said Nekhlyúdob, shrugging his shoulders with vexation. 'Why don't you go to the dispensary when you're ill? That's what the dispensary is for. Haven't you been told of it?'

'We have, master, but I've no time. There's the obligatory work on the estate, our own work, and the children, and I'm all alone. We are lone people.'

### CHAPTER III

NEKHLÝÚDOV went into the hut. The uneven smoke-begrimed walls of one end of the room had all sorts of rags and clothing hanging up on them, and the best corner was literally covered with reddish cockroaches that had collected round the icon and the benches. In the middle of the black, smelly, fourteen-foot-square hovel, there was a

large crack in the ceiling, which though propped up in two places was bulging so that it threatened to collapse at any moment.

'Yes, the hut is very bad,' said Nekhlyúdiv, looking straight at Chúris, who did not seem inclined to begin speaking about this state of things.

'It will crush us and will crush the children,' muttered the woman in a tearful voice, leaning against the brick oven under the bunks.

'Don't you talk,' Chúris said sternly, and with a subtle smile showing slightly under his moustache he turned to the master. 'I can't think what could be done to it, your honour—to the hut. I have put up props and boards, but nothing can be done.'

'How are we to live through the winter here? Oh, oh, oh!' said the woman.

'If we put up some more props and new struts,' her husband interrupted her with a quiet business-like expression, 'and changed one of the rafters, we might somehow get through the winter. We might get along—only the props will crowd the hut, that's all. But if we touch it, there won't be a sound bit left. It's only as long as it's not touched that it holds together,' he concluded, evidently well pleased to have realized that fact.

Nekhlyúdiv was vexed and grieved that Chúris had let himself come to such a pass and had not applied to him sooner, for ever since his arrival he had never refused help to a peasant, and only tried to get them to come straight to him with their troubles. He even felt a sort of animosity against Chúris, and angrily shrugged his shoulders and frowned; but the sight of the wretchedness around him and Chúris's quiet, self-satisfied appearance in the midst of it, changed his vexation into a melancholy feeling of hopelessness.

'Now why didn't you tell me sooner, Iván?' he

said reproachfully, sitting down on the dirty crooked bench.

'I daren't, your honour,' Chúris replied with the same barely perceptible smile, shifting from one dirty bare foot to the other on the uneven earth floor, but he said this so boldly and calmly that it was hard to believe that he had not dared to apply to his master.

'We are only peasants: how can we dare . . .' began the woman with a sob.

'Hold your jabber,' Chúris addressed her again.

'It's impossible for you to live in this hut. It's nonsense!' said Nekhlyúdob after a pause. 'Now this is what we'll do, friend . . .'

'Yes, sir,' Chúris replied.

'You've seen those brick cottages with hollow walls that I have been building in the new village?'

'Of course I have,' answered Chúris, showing his still sound and white teeth in a smile. 'We were quite surprised at the way they were laid. Tricky cottages! The children were laughing and asked if they were going to be store-houses, and the walls filled in to keep the rats out. . . . Grand cottages!' he finished, shaking his head with a look of ironical perplexity. 'Just like jails!'

'Yes, they are fine cottages, warm and dry, and not so likely to catch on fire,' said the master with a frown on his young face, evidently annoyed by the peasant's irony.

'No gainsaying, your honour—grand cottages!'

'Well then, one of them is quite ready. It is twenty-three feet square, with a passage and a larder, and is quite ready. I might let you have it at cost price and you could pay me when you can,' said the master with a self-satisfied smile which he could not control at the thought of his benevolence. 'You can pull down this old one and use it to build

a granary, and we will move the yard buildings too. There is good water there. I will allot you fresh land for your vegetable plots and you will have arable land quite close. You'll soon live well. Now, don't you like it?' he added, noticing that as soon as he spoke of settling somewhere else, Chúris stood quite motionless and looked at the ground no longer smiling.

'It's as your honour pleases,' he said without looking up.

The old woman came forward as if touched to the quick, and prepared to say something, but her husband forestalled her.

'It's as your honour pleases,' he replied, firmly and yet submissively, looking up at his master and tossing back his hair, 'but it won't do for us to live in the new village.'

'Why not?'

'No, your honour. If you move us there—we're in a bad way as it is, but there we should never be proper peasants. What sort of peasants should we be there? Why, a man couldn't possibly live there . . . but just as you please.'

'Why not?'

'We should be quite ruined, your honour.'

'But why couldn't a man live there?'

'What kind of life would it be? Just think. The place has never been lived in, the water not tested, and there's no pasture. Our hemp plots here have been manured from olden times, but what is there there? There's nothing! All bare! No wattles, no corn-kilns, no sheds—nothing at all. We shall be ruined, your honour, if you drive us there, we shall be ruined completely. The place is new, unknown . . . ' he repeated thoughtfully but shaking his head decisively.

Nekhlyúdob began to argue that the change

would on the contrary be very advantageous for him, that wattles and sheds would be erected, that the water was good there, and so on; but Chúris's dull silence confused him and he felt he was not saying the right things. Chúris did not reply, but when his master stopped, remarked with a slight smile that it would be better to house the old domestic serfs and Alëshka, the fool, in the new village, to watch over the grain there.

'That would be fine,' he remarked, and laughed calmly. 'No, it's a hopeless business, your honour!'

'Well, what if the place is uninhabited?' Nekhlúdiv insisted patiently. 'This place was uninhabited once, but now people live here; and you will be the first to settle in the new village and will bring luck. . . . You must certainly settle there . . .'

'Oh sir, your honour, how can they be compared?' said Chúris with animation, as if afraid the master might take a definite decision. 'Here we are in the Commune—it's lively, and we're accustomed to it. We have the road, and the pond here for the wife to wash the clothes and water the cattle, and our whole peasant establishment here from days of old: the threshing-floor and little vegetable plot, and these willows that my parents planted. My grandfather and father breathed their last here and if only I can end my days here, your honour, I don't ask anything more. If you will have the goodness to let my hut be mended, we shall be very grateful for your kindness. If not, we'll manage to live somehow in the old one to the end of our days. Let us pray for you all our lives,' he continued, bowing low. 'Don't turn us from our nest, master. . . .'

While Chúris was speaking, louder and louder jobs came from the place under the bunks where his wife stood, and when her husband said 'master' she

unexpectedly sprang forward and threw herself on her knees at Nekhlyúdob's feet, weeping bitterly.

'Don't ruin us, benefactor! You are like father and mother to us! How could we move? We are old, lonely people. As God, so you . . . ' and she began her lamentations again.

Nekhlyúdob jumped up from the bench to raise the old woman, but she beat her head on the earthen floor in a kind of passionate despair and pushed away his hand.

'What are you doing? Please get up. If you don't wish to go, you needn't. I won't force you,' he said, waving his arms and stepping towards the door.

When Nekhlyúdob had again sat down on the bench and the silence in the hut was only interrupted by the wailing of the woman who had retired under the bunk and stood there wiping her tears with the sleeve of her smock, he realized for the first time what the tumbledown hovel, the broken-down well with the muddy puddle, the rotting sheds and outhouse, and the broken willows which he saw through the crooked window, meant to Chúris and his wife, and he felt depressed, sad, and without knowing why, ashamed.

'Why didn't you tell the Commune last Sunday that you needed a cottage, Iván? I don't know now how to help you. I told you all at the first meeting that I have settled on the estate to devote my life to you; and I was ready to deprive myself of everything to make you contented and happy, and I swear before God that I will keep my word,' said the young proprietor, ignorant of the fact that outpourings of that kind are ill adapted to arouse faith in anyone, and least of all in a Russian, who likes not words but deeds, and dislikes the expression of feelings however fine.

But the simple-hearted young man was so pleased with the feeling he experienced that he could not help pouring it out.

Chúris bent his head to one side, and blinking slowly listened to his master with forced attention, as to one who had to be listened to though he was saying things that were not very nice, and did not at all concern 'us'.

'But I can't give everybody all I am asked for. If I did not refuse some who ask me for timber, I should soon not have any left myself and should be unable to give to those who really need it. That is why I gave the "Crown wood" for the betterment of the peasants' buildings, and handed it over completely to the Commune. That wood is now not mine, but belongs to you peasants. I can no longer dispose of it, but the Commune does what it sees fit with it. Come to the meeting to-night. I will tell them of your request, and if they resolve to give you wood for a new hut it will be all right, but I have no timber now. I wish to help you with all my heart, but if you don't want to move, the matter is not in my hands but rests with the Commune. Do you understand me?'

'We are very grateful for your kindness, your honour,' answered Chúris, abashed. 'If you will oblige us with the timber for the building, we will get straight that way. . . . Anyhow, what's the Commune? Everybody knows. . . .'

'No, you must come.'

'Yes, I'll come. Why not? But all the same I won't beg of the Commune.'



## CHAPTER IV

THE young landlord evidently wished to ask the couple something more; he did not rise from the bench but looked hesitatingly now at Chúris and now at the empty unheated brick oven.

'Have you had dinner?' he asked at last.

A mocking smile showed under Chúris's moustache, as if it amused him that the master should ask such a silly question, and he did not answer.

'What dinner, benefactor?' said the woman with a deep sigh. 'We've eaten bread—that's our dinner. We had no time to get sorrel to-day, so I had nothing to make soup of, and what kvas there was I gave the children.'

'To-day we have a strict fast, your honour,' said Chúris, explaining his wife's words. 'Bread and onions—that's our peasant food. Thank the Lord we have grain, by your honour's kindness—for many of our peasants haven't even that. The onions failed everywhere this year. Michael the gardener asked two kopeks<sup>1</sup> a bunch when we sent to him the other day, so there's nowhere the likes of us can buy any. Since Easter we haven't been to Church. We can't even afford a candle to put in front of St. Nicholas's icon.'

Nekhlyúdob had long known, not by hearsay or by trusting to other people's words, but by personal observation, the extreme poverty in which his serfs lived; but that reality was in such contrast with his whole upbringing, his bent of mind, and the course of his life, that he involuntarily kept forgetting it, and whenever he was forcibly reminded of it, as now, he felt intolerably depressed and sad, as though he were tormented by a reminder of some crime committed and unatoned for.

<sup>1</sup> Two kopeks were about a halfpenny.

'Why are you so poor?' he asked, involuntarily uttering his thought.

'What else could we be but poor, master, your honour? What is our land like? As you know, it's clay and mounds, and we must have angered God, for since the cholera year the crops won't grow. And we have less meadow and less arable land now; some have been taken into the owner's farm and some added to his fields. I am a lonely man and old. . . . I'd be glad to bestir myself but I haven't the strength. My wife is ailing, and hardly a year passes without another girl baby, and they all have to be fed. Here am I working alone, and there are seven of us at home. I often sin before God, thinking that if He took some of them soon, things would be easier, and it would be better for them than suffering here. . . .'

'O-oh!' the woman sighed aloud, as if confirming her husband's words.

'Here's all the help I have,' Chúris continued, pointing to an unkempt flaxen-haired boy of seven with an enormous belly, who had just then come in timidly, making the door creak, and who now, holding onto his father's shirt with both his little hands, stood gazing with astonished eyes from under his brow at the master. 'All the help I have is this,' Chúris continued in his deep voice, stroking the child's flaxen hair with his rough hand. 'How long shall I have to wait for him? The work is getting beyond me. It's not so much my age as the rupture that is getting the best of me. In bad weather I'm ready to scream, and by rights I ought to be released from serf-labour on account of my age.<sup>1</sup> There's Dútlav, Demkin, Zyábrev—all

<sup>1</sup> Under serfdom a man and his wife had to work some days each week for the owner, and they were reckoned as one unit.

younger than me—who have long since stopped working on the land. But I have no one to work for me—that's the trouble. We have to eat, so I am struggling on, your honour.'

'I should really be glad to help you. But what can I do?' said the young master, looking compassionately at the serf.

'How can it be helped? Of course if a man holds land he must work for his master—we know that well enough. I'll have somehow to wait for my lad to grow up. Only, if you'll be so good, excuse him from school! The other day the clerk came round and said that your honour ordered him to go to school. Do let him off, your honour. What sense has he got? He's too young to understand anything.'

'Oh, no, friend. Say what you will, your boy can understand,' replied Nekhlyúdob, 'and it's time for him to be learning. I'm saying it for your own good. Just think: when he grows up and is head of the house he'll be able to read and write, and to read in Church too—with God's help everything will go right in the home,' he added, trying to express himself so as to be understood, but yet blushing and hesitating without knowing why.

'There's no denying it, your honour, you don't wish us any harm, but there's no one to stay at home when my wife and I go to work on the owner's land; of course he's small, but still he's useful to drive in the cattle and water the horses. Such as he is, still he's a peasant,' and Chúris smiled and took hold of the child's nose with his thick fingers and blew it for him.

'All the same, send him when you are at home and he has time. Do you hear? Be sure to send him.'

Chúris sighed deeply and gave no reply.

## CHAPTER V

Yes, and I wanted to ask why your manure has not been carted,' continued Nekhlyúdob.

'What manure have I got, sir, your honour? There's nothing to cart. What live-stock have I got? I have a little mare and a foal. The heifer I sold to the inn-keeper as a calf last autumn. That's all the live-stock I have.'

'How is that? You haven't enough cattle, yet you sold a heifer as a calf?' the master asked with surprise.

'But what could I feed it on?'

'Haven't you enough straw to feed a cow? Others have enough.'

'Others have manured land, but mine is nothing but clay. I can't do anything with it.'

'Well then dress it, so that it should not be all clay, then it will yield grain and there'll be something to feed the cattle on.'

'But I have no cattle, so how can there be any manure?'

'This is a strange vicious circle,' thought Nekhlyúdob, but could not imagine how to advise the peasant.

'And then again, your honour,' Chúris went on, 'it is not manure that makes the corn grow, but only God. Last year I got six ricks from an unmanured plot, but from the manured land we got almost nothing. It's only God!' he added with a sigh. 'And then cattle do not thrive in our yard. This is the sixth year they have died. Last year one calf died, the other I sold, as we had nothing to live on, and the year before last a fine cow perished: she was driven home from the pasture all right, then suddenly she staggered and staggered and died. Just my bad luck!'

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'Well friend, so that you should not say you have no cattle because you have no fodder, and no fodder because you have no cattle, here's something to buy a cow with,' said Nekhlyúdob, blushing as he took some crumpled paper money out of his trouser pocket and began sorting it. 'Buy yourself a cow, and I wish you luck; and you can have fodder from the threshing ground; I'll give orders. Mind you have a cow by next Sunday. I'll look in.'

Chúris stood so long smiling and shifting from foot to foot without stretching out his hand for the money, that Nekhlyúdob at last put it on the table, blushing still more.

'We are greatly satisfied with your kindness,' Chúris said with his usual rather sarcastic smile.

His wife stood under the bunks sighing heavily, and seemed to be saying a prayer.

The young master felt embarrassed; he hurriedly rose from his seat, went out into the passage, and called Chúris to follow. The sight of the man he was befriending was so pleasant that he did not wish to part from him at once.

'I am glad to help you,' he said, stopping by the well. 'I can help you because I know you are not lazy. If you take pains I'll help you, and with God's aid you'll get straight.'

'It's not a case of getting straight, your honour,' said Chúris, his face suddenly assuming a serious and even stern expression as if quite dissatisfied that the master should suppose he could get straight. 'In my father's time I lived with my brothers and we did not know any want, but when he died and we broke up, everything went from bad to worse. It's all from being alone!'

'Why did you separate?'

'All because of our wives, your honour. Your grandfather was not living then. In his time we

should not have dared to, there used to be real order then. Like yourself he looked into everything, and we should not have dared to think of separating. Your grandfather did not like to let the peasants get into bad ways. But after him Andrew Ilých managed us. God forgive him! He's left different memories behind—he was a drunken and unreliable man. We went to ask him once and again. "The women make life impossible," we said, "allow us to separate." Well he had us thrashed once and again, but in the end the women got their way and the families separated and lived apart. Of course everyone knows what a one-man home is! Besides there was no kind of order. Andrew Ilých ruled us as he pleased. "See that you have everything that's needed,"—but how a peasant was to get it he didn't ask. Then the poll-tax was increased, and more provisions were requisitioned and we had less land, and the crops began to fail. And when the time came for re-allotting the land, he took away from our manured land to add to the owner's—the rascal—and did for us altogether. We might as well die! Your father—the kingdom of heaven be his!—was a kind master, but we rarely had sight of him; he always lived in Moscow, and of course we had to cart more produce there. Sometimes when a thaw set in and the roads were impassable and we had no fodder left we still had to cart! The master could not do without it. We dare not complain of that, but there was no order. Now that your honour lets every peasant come to you, we are a different people and the steward is a different man. At least we know now that we have a master. And it's impossible to say how grateful the peasants are to your honour! During the time you were under guardianship we had no real master. Everybody was master—your guardian and Ilých, and

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his wife was mistress, and the clerk from the police-office was a master too. At that time we peasants suffered a great deal—oh God! How much sorrow!

Again Nekhlyúdob experienced something like shame or remorse. He raised his hat and went his way.

## CHAPTER VI

'EPIFÁN WISEMAN wishes to sell a horse,' Nekhlyúdob read in his note-book, and he crossed the street to Epifán's home.

This hut was carefully thatched with straw from the threshing-floor of the estate, and was built of light grey aspen timber—also from the master's forest. It had two red painted shutters to each window, a little roofed porch, and board railings with fancy patterns cut in them. The passage and unheated portion of the house were also sound; but the general look of well-being and sufficiency was rather marred by a shed with an unfinished wattle wall and unthatched roof adjoining the gateway. Just as Nekhlyúdob reached the porch from one side, two women came up from the other carrying between them a full tub slung from a pole. One was Epifán Wiseman's wife, the other his mother. The former was a sturdy red-cheeked woman with a very fully developed bosom and broad fleshy cheeks. She wore a clean smock with embroidered sleeves and collar, an apron with similar embroidery, a new linen skirt, shoes, glass beads and a smart square head-dress embroidered with red cotton and spangles.

The end of the pole did not sway but lay firmly on her broad solid shoulder. The easy effort noticeable in her red face, in the curve of her back, and the measured movement of her arms and legs, indicated excellent health and extraordinary masculine strength.

Epifán's mother who carried the other end of the pole was, on the contrary, one of those elderly women who seem to have reached the utmost limit of age and decrepitude possible to a living person. Her bony figure, clad in a dirty torn smock and discoloured skirt, was so bent that the pole rested rather on her back than on her shoulder. Her hands were of a dark red-brown colour, with crooked fingers which seemed unable to unbend and with which she seemed to clutch the pole for support. Her drooping head, wrapped in some clout, bore the unsightly evidence of want and great age. From under her low forehead, furrowed in all directions by deep wrinkles, her two red, lashless eyes looked dimly on the ground. One yellow tooth protruded from under her sunken upper lip and, constantly moving, touched at times her pointed chin. The folds on the lower part of her face and throat were like bags that swung with every movement. She breathed heavily and hoarsely, but her bare deformed feet, though they dragged along the ground with effort, moved evenly one after the other.

## CHAPTER VII

HAVING almost collided with the master, the young woman looked abashed, briskly set down the tub, bowed, glanced at him with sparkling eyes from under her brow, and clattering with her shoes ran up the steps, trying to hide a slight smile with the embroidered sleeve of her smock.

'You go and take the yoke back to Aunt Nastásya, mother,' she said to the old woman, pausing at the door.

The modest young man looked attentively but sternly at the rosy-faced woman, frowned, and turned to the old one, who having disengaged the



yoke from the tub with her rough hands and lifted it onto her shoulders, was submissively directing her steps towards the neighbouring hut.

'Is your son at home?' the master asked.

The old woman, bending still lower, bowed and was about to speak, but lifting her hand to her mouth began coughing so that Nekhlyúdob did not wait, but went into the hut.

Epifán, who was sitting on the bench in the best corner, rushed to the oven when he saw his master, as if trying to hide from him, hurriedly shoved something onto the bunk, and with mouth and eyes twitching, pressed himself against the wall as if to make way for the master.

Epifán was a man of about thirty, slender, well set, with brown hair and a young pointed beard, he would have been rather good-looking had it not been for the evasive little brown eyes that looked unpleasantly from under his puckered brows, and for the absence of two front teeth, which at once caught the eye as his lips were short and constantly moving. He had on a holiday shirt with bright red gussets, striped cotton trousers, and heavy boots with wrinkled legs. The interior of his hut was not so crowded and gloomy as Chúris's, though it was also stuffy, smelt of smoke and sheepskin coats, and was littered in the same untidy way with peasant garments and implements. Two things struck one as strange: a small dented samovar which stood on a shelf, and the portrait of an archimandrite with a red nose and six fingers, that hung near the icon with its brass facings, in a black frame with the remnant of a dirty piece of glass. Nekhlyúdob looked with dissatisfaction at the samovar, the archimandrite's portrait, and the bunk where the end of a brass-mounted pipe protruded from under some rags, and addressed the peasant.

'Good morning, Epifán,' he said, looking into his eyes.

Epifán bowed and muttered, 'Hope you're well, y'r Ex'cency,' pronouncing the last word with peculiar tenderness while his eyes ran rapidly over his master's whole figure, the hut, the floor, and the ceiling, not resting on anything. Then he hurriedly went to the bunk and pulled down from it a coat which he began putting on.

'Why are you doing that?' said Nekhlyúdob, sitting down on the bench and trying to look at Epifán as sternly as possible.

'What else could I do, y'r Ex'cency? I think we know our place. . . .'

'I have come to ask what you need to sell a horse for, and how many horses you have, and which horse you want to sell,' said Nekhlyúdob drily, evidently repeating questions he had prepared.

'We are very pleased that y'r Ex'cency deigns to come to peasants like us,' replied Epifán with a rapid glance at the archimandrite's portrait, at the oven, at Nekhlyúdob's boots, and at everything except his master's face. 'We always pray God for y'r Ex'cency. . . .'

'Why must you sell a horse?' Nekhlyúdob repeated, raising his voice and clearing his throat.

Epifán sighed, shook back his hair, his glance again roving over the whole hut, and noticing a cat that lay quietly purring on the bench, shouted to it, 'Sss, get away, beast!' and hurriedly turned to the master.

'It's a horse, y'r Ex'cency, that's no good. . . . If it were a good beast I wouldn't sell it, y'r Ex'cency.'

'And how many horses have you?'

'Three horses, y'r Ex'cency.'

'And no foals?'

'Why certainly, y'r Ex'cency, I have a foal too.'

## CHAPTER VIII

'COME, let me see your horses. Are they in the yard?'

'Exactly so, y'r Ex'cency. I have done as I was ordered, y'r Ex'cency. As if we could disobey y'r Ex'cency! Jacob Alpátych told me not to let the horses out into the field. "The prince will look at them," he said, so we did not let them out. We dare not disobey y'r Ex'cency.'

As Nekhlyúdob was passing out of the hut, Epifán snatched his pipe from the bunk and shoved it behind the oven; his lips continued to move restlessly even when the master was not looking at him.

A lean little grey mare was rummaging among some rotten straw under the penthouse, and a two-months-old long-legged foal of some nondescript colour, with bluish legs and muzzle, kept close to her thin tail which was full of burrs. In the middle of the yard, with its eyes shut and pensively hanging its head, stood a thick-bellied sorrel gelding—by his appearance a good peasant horse.

'Are these all the horses you have?'

'No, sir, y'r Ex'cency, there's also the mare and the foal,' Epifán said, pointing to the horses which his master could not have helped seeing.

'I see. And which of them do you want to sell?'

'Why, this one, y'r Ex'cency,' replied Epifán, shaking the skirt of his coat towards the drowsy gelding and continually blinking and twitching his lips. The gelding opened its eyes and lazily turned its tail to him.

'He doesn't look old and is a sturdy horse,' said Nekhlyúdob. 'Just catch him, and let me see his teeth. I can tell if he is old.'

'It's impossible for one person to catch him, x'cency. The beast is not worth a penny and has temper—he bites and kicks, Ex'cency,' replied pifán, smiling gaily and letting his eyes rove in all directions.

'What nonsense! Catch him, I tell you.'

Epifán smiled for a long time, shuffling from foot to foot, and only when Nekhlyúdob cried angrily: 'Well, what are you about?' did he rush under the penthouse, bring out a halter, and begin running after the horse, frightening it and following it.

The young master was evidently weary of seeing this, and perhaps wished to show his skill.

'Let me have the halter!' he said.

'I beg your pardon, how can y'r Ex'cency? Please don't. . . .'

But Nekhlyúdob went up to the horse's head and suddenly seized it by the ears with such force that the gelding, which was after all a very quiet peasant horse, swayed and snorted, trying to get away. When Nekhlyúdob noticed that it was quite unnecessary to use such force, and looked at Epifán who continued to smile, the idea—most humiliating to one of his age—occurred to him that Epifán was making fun of him and regarded him as a child. He flushed, let go of the horse's ears, and without making use of the halter opened its mouth and examined its teeth: the eye-teeth were sound and the double teeth full—which the young master knew the meaning of. Of course the horse was a young one.

Meanwhile Epifán had gone to the penthouse, and noticing that a harrow was not lying in its place, moved it and stood it up against the wattle wall.

'Come here!' cried Nekhlyúdob with an expression of childish annoyance on his face and a voice

almost tearful with vexation and anger. 'Now, is this horse old?'

'Please, y'r Ex'cency, very old. It must be twenty. . . . Some horses . . .'

'Silence! You're a liar and a good-for-nothing! A decent peasant does not lie—he has no need to!' said Nekhlyúdob, choking with angry tears. He stopped, in order not to disgrace himself by bursting into tears before the peasant. Epifán too was silent, and looking as if he would begin to cry at any moment, sniffed and slightly jerked his head.

'Tell me, what will you plough with if you sell this horse?' Nekhlyúdob went on when he had calmed down sufficiently to speak in his ordinary tone. 'You are being sent to do work on foot so as to let your horses be in better condition for the ploughing, and you want to sell your last one? And above all, why do you tell lies?'

As soon as his master grew calm Epifán quieted down too. He stood straight, still twitching his lips and his eyes roaming from one object to another.

'We'll come out to work for y'r Ex'cy no worse than the others.'

'But what will you plough with?'

'Don't trouble about that, we'll get y'r Ex'cency's work done!' said Epifán, shooing at the horse and driving it away. 'If I didn't need the money would I sell him?'

'What do you need the money for?'

'We have no flour left, y'r Ex'cency, and I must pay my debts to other peasants, y'r Ex'cency.'

'No flour? How is it that others with families still have flour, while you without a family have none? What have you done with it?'

'Eaten it up, y'r Ex'cency, and now there's none left at all. I'll buy a horse before the autumn, y'r Ex'cency.'

'Don't dare to think of selling the horse!'

'But if I don't sell it, y'r Ex'cency, what kind of a life will ours be, when we've no flour and daren't sell anything . . .', replied Epifán turning aside, twitching his lips, and suddenly casting an insolent look at his master's face—'it means we're to starve!'

'Mind, my man!' Nekhlyúdob shouted, pale with anger and experiencing a feeling of personal animosity towards the peasant. 'I won't keep such peasants as you. It will go ill with you.'

'That's as you wish, if I've not satisfied y'r Ex'cency,' replied Epifán, closing his eyes with an expression of feigned humility, 'but it seems that no fault has been noticed in me. Of course if y'r Ex'cency doesn't like me, it's all in your power: but I don't know what I am to be punished for.'

'For this: that your sheds are not thatched, your wattle walls are broken, your manure is not ploughed in, and you sit at home smoking a pipe and not working; and because you don't give your mother, who turned the whole farm over to you, a bit of bread, but let your wife beat her so that she has to come to me with complaints.'

'Oh no, y'r Ex'cency, I don't even know what a pipe is!' replied Epifán in confusion, apparently hurt most of all by being accused of smoking a pipe. 'It is possible to say anything about a man . . .'

'There you are, lying again! I saw it myself.'

'How should I dare to lie to y'r Ex'cency?'

Nekhlyúdob bit his lip silently and began pacing up and down the yard. Epifán stood in one spot and without lifting his eyes watched his master's feet.

'Listen, Epifán!' said Nekhlyúdob suddenly in a voice of childlike gentleness, stopping in front of the peasant and trying to conceal his excitement. 'You can't live like that—you will ruin your life.'

Bethink yourself. If you want to be a good peasant change your way of life, give up your bad habits, stop lying, don't get drunk, and respect your mother. You see I know all about you. Attend to your allotment, don't steal from the Crown forest, and stop going to the tavern. What good is all that?—just think. If you need anything come to me and ask straight out for what you want, and tell me why you want it. Don't lie, but tell the whole truth, and then I shan't refuse anything I can do for you.'

'Excuse me, y'r Ex'cency, I think we can understand y'r Ex'cency!' Epifán replied smiling, as if he quite understood the excellence of the master's joke.

That smile and that reply completely disillusioned Nekhlyúdob of his hope of touching Epifán and bringing him to the right path by persuasion. Moreover he felt all the time as if it were indecorous for him, who had authority, to persuade his own serf, as if all that he had said was not at all what he ought to have said. He sadly bowed his head and went into the passage. The old woman was sitting on the threshold groaning aloud, as if to show her sympathy with the master's words which she had overheard.

'Here is something to buy yourself bread with,' Nekhlyúdob whispered, giving her a ruble note. 'But buy it yourself, and don't give it to Epifán or he will drink it.'

• The old woman took hold of the door-post with her bony hand, trying to rise and thank the master, but her head began shaking, and Nekhlyúdob had already crossed the road before she had got to her feet.

## CHAPTER IX

'WHITE DAVID wants grain and posts,' was the next entry in Nekhlyúdob's note-book.

After passing several homesteads, he met his steward, Jacob Alpátych, at the corner of the lane. The latter having seen his master in the distance had removed his oilskin cap, produced a foulard kerchief, and begun wiping his fat red face.

'Put on your cap, Jacob! Put it on I tell you. . . .'

'Where has your Excellency been pleased to go?' said Jacob, holding up his cap to shade the sun, but not putting it on.

'I've been to see Wiseman. Now tell me, why has he become like that?' asked the master continuing on his way.

'Like what, your Excellency?' replied the steward, who followed his master at a respectful distance and having put on his cap was smoothing his moustache.

'What indeed! He is a perfect scamp- lazy, a thief, a liar, ill-treats his mother, and seems to be such a confirmed good-for-nothing that there is no reforming him.'

'I don't know, your Excellency, why he has displeased you so. . . .'

'And his wife too,' his master interrupted him, 'seems to be a horrid creature. The mother is dressed worse than any beggar and has nothing to eat, but the wife is all dressed up, and so is he. I don't at all know what to do with him.'

Jacob grew visibly confused when Nekhlyúdob mentioned Epifán's wife.

'Well if he has let himself go like that,' he began, 'we ought to take measures. It's true he's poor, like all one-man householders, but unlike some others he does keep himself in hand a bit. He's intelligent, can read and write, and seems pretty



honest He is always sent round to collect the poll-tax, and he has been village elder for three years while I have been here, and nothing wrong has been noticed. Three years ago it pleased your guardian to dismiss him, but he was all right also when he worked on the estate. Only he has taken rather to drink, having lived at the Post Station in town, so measures should be taken against that. When he misbehaved in the past we used to threaten him with a flogging and he'd come to his senses, and it was good for him and there was peace in the family; but as you don't approve of such measures, I really don't know what we are to do with him. I know he has let himself go pretty badly. He can't be sent as a soldier because he has lost two teeth, as you will have noticed. He knocked them out purposely a long time ago.<sup>1</sup> But he is not the only one, if I may take the liberty of reporting to your Excellence, who has got quite out of hand.'

'Let that matter alone, Jacob!' said Nekhlyúdob with a slight smile. 'We have discussed it over and over again. You know what I think about it, and say what you will I shall still not change my mind. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

'Of course your Excellence knows best,' said Jacob, shrugging his shoulders and gazing at his master from behind as if what he saw boded no good. 'As to the old woman, you are pleased to trouble about her needlessly,' he continued. 'It's true she brought up her fatherless children, and raised Epifán and married him off and all that; but among the peasants it is the custom, when a mother or father hands over the homestead to a son, that

<sup>1</sup> The proprietors had to send a certain proportion of their serfs to serve in the army, but they had to be fit men with sound teeth.

<sup>2</sup> As to the desirability of flogging the peasants.

the son and his wife become the masters and the old woman has to earn her bread as best she can. Of course they have no delicate feelings, but it is the usual way among the peasants. So I make bold to say that the old woman has troubled you needlessly. She is an intelligent woman and a good house-keeper, but why trouble the master about every trifle? Well, she had a dispute with her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law may have pushed her—those are women's affairs! They might have made it up again instead of troubling you. And besides, you take it all too much to heart,' added the steward, looking with fatherly tenderness and condescension at his master who was walking silently up the street before him with long strides.

'Are you going home, sir?' he asked.

'No, to see White David, or the Goat . . . how is he called?'

'Now that's another sluggard, let me tell you. The whole Goat family are like that. Whatever you may do with him nothing helps. I drove over the peasant fields yesterday, and he has not even sown his buckwheat. What is one to do with such people? If only the old man at least taught his son, but he is just such a sluggard himself—whether it's for himself or for the owner he always bungles it. . . . Both your guardian and I—what have we not done to them? He's been sent to the police-station, and been flogged at home—which is what you are pleased to disapprove of. . . .'

'Who? Surely not the old man?'

'The old man, sir. Your guardian has many a time had him flogged before the whole Commune. But would your Excellence believe it, it had no effect! He would give himself a shake, go home, and behave just the same. And I must admit that David is a quiet peasant and not stupid; he doesn't

smoke or drink, that is,' Jacob explained, 'but yet you see he's worse than some drunkards. The only thing would be to conscript him, or exile him—nothing else can be done. The whole Goat family are like that. Matryúshka, who lives in that hovel, is of the same family and is a damned sluggard too. But your Excellence does not require me?' added the steward, noticing that his master was not listening to him.

'No, you may go,' replied Nekhlyúdob absent-mindedly, and went on towards White David's hut.

David's hut stood crooked and solitary at the end of the village. It had no yard, no kiln, and no barn; only some dirty cattle sheds clung to one side of it while on the other brushwood and beams, prepared for outbuildings, lay all in a heap. Tall green grass was growing where there had once been a yard. There was not a living being near the hut, except a pig that lay grunting in a puddle by the threshold.

Nekhlyúdob knocked at a broken window, but as no one answered he went into the entry and shouted, 'Hullo there!' but got no reply to this either. He entered the passage, looked into the empty cattle stalls, and entered the open door of the hut. An old red cock and two hens, jerking their crops and clattering with their claws, were strutting about the floor and benches. Seeing a man they spread their wings and, cackling desperately, flew against the walls, one of them jumping up on the oven. The hut, which was not quite fourteen-foot square, was almost filled by the brick oven with its broken chimney, a weaving loom that had not been put away though it was summer, and a blackened table with a warped and cracked top.

Though it was dry outside there was still a dirty puddle inside near the threshold, which had been formed by a leak in the roof and ceiling during

previous rain. There were no beds. It was difficult to believe that the place was inhabited—there was such an appearance of absolute neglect and disorder both within the hut and outside. Yet White David and his whole family lived there, and at that very moment, though it was a hot June day, David, wrapped head and all in his sheepskin, lay huddled in a corner on the top of the oven fast asleep. The frightened hen that had alighted there and had not yet quieted down was walking over his back without waking him.

Not seeing anyone in the hut Nekhlyúdob was about to leave, when a long-drawn slobbering sigh betrayed the sleeper's presence.

'Hullo, who's there?' shouted the master.

Another long-drawn sigh came from the oven.

'Who is there? Come here!'

Another sigh, a moan, and a loud yawn replied to the master's call.

'Well, what are you about?'

Something moved slowly on the oven. The skirt of a worn-out sheepskin coat appeared, one big foot in a tattered bast shoe came down, and then another, and finally the whole of White David appeared, sitting on the oven and lazily and discontentedly rubbing his eyes with his big fist. Slowly bending his head he looked round the hut with a yawn, and, seeing his master, began to move a little quicker than before, but still so slowly that Nekhlyúdob had time to walk some three times from the puddle to the loom and back while David was getting down from the oven.

White David was really white: his hair, body, and face were all quite white. He was tall and very stout, but stout as peasants are—that is, his whole body was stout and not only his stomach—but it was a flabby and unhealthy stoutness. His rather

comely face, with pale blue quiet eyes and broad, full beard, bore the impress of ill-health: there was no vestige of sunburn or colour in it; it was all of a pale yellowish tint with a purple shadow under the eyes, and seemed swollen and bloated. His hands were puffy and yellow, like those of people suffering from dropsy, and were covered with fine white hair. He was so drowsy that he could hardly open his eyes or stand without staggering and yawning.

'How is it you are not ashamed,' Nekhlyúdob began, 'to sleep in broad daylight when you ought to be building your out-houses and when you are short of grain. . . .'

As soon as David came to his senses and began to realize that his master was standing before him, he folded his hands below his stomach, hung his head, inclining it a little on one side, and did not stir a limb. He was silent; but the expression of his face and the pose of his whole body said: 'I know, I know, it's not the first time I have heard this. Well, beat me if you must. I'll endure it.' He seemed to wish that his master would stop speaking and be quick and beat him, even beat him painfully on his plump cheeks, if having done so he would but leave him in peace. Noticing that David did not understand him, Nekhlyúdob tried by various questions to rouse the peasant from his submissively patient taciturnity.

'Why did you ask me for timber, and then leave it lying about here a whole month, and that too at the time when you have most leisure, eh?'

David remained persistently silent and did not stir.

'Come now, answer me!'

David muttered something and blinked his white eyelashes.

'You know one has to work, friend. What would there be without work? You see you have no grain now, and why? Because your land was badly ploughed, not harrowed, and sown too late—and all from laziness. You ask me for grain: "well suppose I give you some, since you must not starve—but that sort of thing won't do. Whose grain am I to give you? Whose do you think? Come, answer me! Whose grain am I to give you?" Nekhlyúdob insisted.

'The proprietor's,' muttered David, raising his eyes timidly and questioningly.

'But where does the proprietor's grain come from? Think of it. Who ploughed and harrowed the land? Who sowed and reaped it? The peasants. Is that not so? Then you see if I am to give away the grain, I ought to give more to those who worked most to produce it, and you have worked least. They complain about your work on the estate too. You work least, but ask for your master's grain more than anyone. Why should I give it to you and not to others? You know if everybody lay on their backs as you do, we should all have starved long ago. One must work, friend. This sort of thing is wrong. Do you hear me, David?'

'I hear, sir,' muttered David slowly through his teeth.

## CHAPTER X

Just then the head of a peasant woman carrying linen hung on a wooden yoke was seen through the window, and a moment later David's mother, a tall, very fresh-looking and active woman of about fifty, entered the hut. Her pockmarked and wrinkled face was not handsome, but her straight firm nose, her thin compressed lips and keen grey eyes, expressed intelligence and energy. The squareness of

her shoulders and flatness of her bosom, the leanness of her arms and the solid muscles of her dark bare legs, bore witness to the fact that she had long since ceased to be a woman and had become simply a labourer. She hurried into the hut, closed the door, pulled down her skirt, and looked angrily at her son. Nekhlyúdov was about to speak to her, but she turned her back on him and began crossing herself before a grimy icon that was visible behind the loom. Having finished doing this, she adjusted the dirty checked kerchief she wore on her head and bowed low to her master.

'A pleasant Lord's day to your Excellency,' she said. 'God bless you, our father. . . .'

When David saw his mother he evidently became confused, and stooped and hung his head still more.

'Thanks, Arína,' replied Nekhlyúdov. 'I've just been speaking to your son about your household.'

'Arína the barge-hauler,' as the peasants had called her since she was a girl, rested her chin on her right fist, supporting that elbow on the palm of her left hand, and without waiting for the master to finish began to speak in such a shrill and ringing tone that her voice filled the whole hut, and from outside it might have seemed as if several women were talking together.

'What's the use of talking to him, dear sir? He can't even speak like a man. There he stands, the lout!' she continued, contemptuously wagging her head at David's pathetic massive figure. 'What's my household, sir, your Excellency? We're paupers. You've got none worse than us in the whole village! We can't do anything for ourselves or for the estate—it's a disgrace! And it's him that's brought us to it. I bore, fed, and reared him, and could scarcely wait for him to grow up, and now this is what

we've got at last! He eats the bread, but we get no more work out of him than from that rotten log. All he does is to lie on the oven, or stand like that and scratch his empty pate,' she went on, mimicking him. 'If only you would frighten him a bit, sir! I ask it myself—punish him for God's sake, or send him to the army. There's no other way out. I can do nothing with him—that's how it is.'

'Now isn't it a sin for you to bring your mother to this, David?' said Nekhlyúdob reproachfully, turning to the peasant.

David did not budge.

'If he were sickly now,' Arfina continued with the same animated gestures, 'but look at him, he's as big as the mill chimney! You would think there'd be enough of him to do some work, the lubberly lout; but no, he's taking a rest on the oven, the sluggard. And if he does start on anything my eyes grow tired of looking at him before he's had time to get up, turn round, and get anything done!' she added in a drawling tone, turning her square shoulders awkwardly from side to side. 'To-day, for instance, my old man himself went to fetch brushwood from the forest and told him to dig holes for the posts: but not he, didn't so much as take the spade in his hands. . . .' She paused for a moment. 'He's done for me, lone woman that I am!' she suddenly shrieked, flourishing her arms and going up to her son with a threatening gesture. 'You fat lazy mug! God forgive me. . . .'

She turned contemptuously and yet with desperation from him, spat, and with tears in her eyes again addressed her master with the same animation, still waving her arms. 'I'm all alone, benefactor! My old man is ill, old, and there's not much good in him either, and I have always to do everything alone. It's enough to crush a stone. To die



would be better, that would end it. He has worn me out, the wretch! Really, father, I'm at the end of my tether! My daughter-in-law died of overwork, and so shall I.'

## CHAPTER XI

'DIED of what?' Nekhlyúdiv asked incredulously.

'From overwork, benefactor, as God is holy, she was used up. We took her from Babúrino the year before last,' continued Arfna, and her angry expression suddenly changed to a sad and tearful one. 'She was a quiet, fresh-looking young woman, dear sir. She had lived in comfort as a girl at her father's and had not known want; but when she came to us and knew what our work was—work on the master's estate and at home and everywhere. . . . She and I alone to do it. It is nothing to me! I'm used to it. But she was with child, dear sir, and began to suffer pain, and was always working beyond her strength, and she overdid it poor thing. A year ago, during St. Peter's Fast,<sup>1</sup> to her misfortune, she bore a son. We had no bread: we had to eat anything, just anything, and there was urgent work to be done— and her milk dried up. It was her first baby, we had no cow, and how can we peasants rear a baby by hand? Well, she was a woman and foolish— that made her grieve still more. And when the baby died she wept and wept for him, lamented and lamented, and there was want and the work had to be done, and things got worse and worse: she was so worn out in the summer that at the Feast of the Intercession<sup>2</sup> she herself died. It was he who destroyed her—the beast!' she repeated, turning with despairing anger to her son. 'What

<sup>1</sup> The feast of St. Peter and St. Paul is June 9th, o.s.

<sup>2</sup> October 1st, o.s.

I wanted to ask of your Excellence . . .' she went on after a pause, lowering her voice and bowing.

'What is it?' Nekhlyúdob asked absent-mindedly, still agitated by her story.

'You see he is still a young man. What work can be expected from me? I'm alive to-day but shall be dead to-morrow. How is he to get on without a wife? He won't be a worker for you. . . . Think of something for us. You are as a father to us.'

'You mean you want to get him married? Well, all right.'

'Be merciful, you who are a father and mother to us!' and on her making a sign to her son, they both dropped on their knees at their master's feet.

'Why do you bow in such a way?' Nekhlyúdob said irritably, raising her by the shoulder. 'Can't you say what you want to say simply? You know I don't like grovellings. Get your son married if you like. I shall be very glad if you know of a wife for him.'

The old woman rose and began rubbing her dry eyes with her sleeve. David followed her example and having rubbed his eyes with his puffy fist continued to stand in the same patiently meek attitude listening to what Arina said.

'There are girls—of course there are. There's Vaska Mikháy's girl, she's all right, but she won't consent unless it's your wish.'

'Doesn't she agree?'

'No, benefactor, not if she's to marry by consent.'

'Then what's to be done? I can't compel her. Look out for someone else—if not one of ours, one from another village. I'll buy her out if she comes willingly, but I won't force her to marry. There is no law that allows that, and it would be a great sin.'

'Eh, eh, benefactor! Is it likely, seeing what our

life is and our poverty, that any girl would come of her own accord? Even the poorest soldier's wife wouldn't agree to such poverty. What peasant will give his girl into a house like this? A desperate man wouldn't do it. Why, we're paupers, beggars. They'd say that we have starved one to death and that the same would happen to their daughter. Who would give his girl?' she added, shaking her head dubiously. 'Just consider, your Excellence.'

'But what can I do?'

'Think of something for us, dear sir,' Arína repeated earnestly. 'What are we to do?'

'But what can I contrive? I can't do anything at all in such a case.'

'Who is to arrange it for us if not you?' said Arína, hanging down her head and spreading her arms out in mournful perplexity.

'As to the grain you asked for, I'll give orders that you shall have some —' said the master after a pause, during which Arína kept sighing and David echoed her. 'I can't do anything more.'

And Nekhlyúdob went out into the passage. The mother and son followed him, bowing.

## CHAPTER XII

'Oh, what a life mine is!' Arína said, sighing deeply.

She stopped and looked angrily at her son. David at once turned and clumsily lifting his thick foot in its enormous and dirty bast shoe heavily over the threshold, disappeared through the door.

'What am I to do with him, master?' Arína went on. 'You see yourself what he is like. He is not a bad man, doesn't drink, is gentle, and wouldn't harm a child—it would be a sin to say otherwise. There's nothing bad in him, and God only knows

what has happened to make him his own enemy. He himself is sad about it. Would you believe it, sir, my heart bleeds when I look at him and see how he suffers. Whatever he may be, I bore him and pity him—oh, how I pity him! . . . You see it's not as if he went against me, or his father, or the authorities. He's timid—like a little child, so to say. How can he live a widower? Arrange something for us, benefactor!' she said again, evidently anxious to remove the bad impression her bitter words might have produced on the master. 'Do you know, sir, your Excellence,' she went on in a confidential whisper, 'I have thought one thing and another and can't imagine why he is like that. It can only be that bad folk have bewitched him.'

She remained silent for a while.

'If I could find the right man, he might be cured.'

'What nonsense you talk, Arina. How can a man be bewitched?'

'Oh, my dear sir, a man can be so bewitched that he's never again a man! As if there were not many bad people in the world! Out of spite they'll take a handful of earth from a man's footprints . . . or something of that sort . . . and he is no longer a man. Is evil far from us? I've been thinking—shouldn't I go to old Dundúk, who lives in Voroběvka? He knows all sorts of charms and herbs, and removes spells and makes water flow from a cross. Perhaps he would help!' said the old woman. 'Maybe he would cure him.'

'Now there is poverty and ignorance!' thought the young master as he strode with big steps through the village, sorrowfully hanging his head. 'What am I to do with him? It's impossible to leave him like that, both for my own sake and on account of the example to others, as well as for himself,' he said, counting off these different reasons on his

fingers. 'I can't bear to see him in such a state, but how am I to get him out of it? He ruins all my best plans for the estate. . . . As long as there are peasants like that my dreams will never be realized,' he reflected, experiencing vexation and anger against White David for ruining his plans. 'Shall I have him sent to Siberia, as Jacob suggests, since he doesn't want to get on; or send him to be a soldier? I should at least be rid of him and should save another and better peasant from being conscripted,' he argued to himself.

He thought of this with satisfaction; but at the same time a vague consciousness told him that he was thinking with only one side of his mind and that it was not right. He stopped. 'Wait a bit, what was I thinking about?' he asked himself. 'Oh yes, into the army or to exile. But what for? He is a good man, better than many others—and besides what do I know. . . . Shall I set him free?' he thought, not now considering the question with only one side of his mind as previously. 'That would be unfair and impossible.' But suddenly a thought occurred to him which pleased him very much, and he smiled with the expression of a man who has solved a difficult problem. 'Take him into my house,' he reflected, 'observe him myself and get him used to work and reform him by kindness, persuasion, and a proper choice of occupation.'

### CHAPTER XIII

'THAT's what I will do,' said Nekhlyúdob to himself with cheerful self-satisfaction, and remembering that he still had to see the rich peasant Dútlov he turned towards a tall roomy homestead with two chimneys, that stood in the middle of the village. As he drew near it he met at the neighbouring hut

a plainly dressed woman of about forty coming to meet him.

'A pleasant holiday, sir!' said she without any sign of timidity, stopping beside him, smiling pleasantly and bowing.

'Good morning, nurse,' he replied. 'How are you? I am going to see your neighbour.'

'Yes, your Excellence, that's a good thing. But won't you please come in? My old man would be so glad!'

'Well, I'll come in and we'll have a talk, nurse. Is this your hut?'

'That's it, sir.'

The woman, who had been his wet-nurse, ran on in front. Following her into the entry Nekhlyúdob sat down on a barrel and lit a cigarette.

'It's hot in there. Let's sit out here and have a chat,' he said in answer to his nurse's invitation to enter the hut. The nurse was still a fresh-looking and handsome woman. Her features, and especially her large dark eyes, much resembled those of her master. She folded her arms under her apron and looking fearlessly at Nekhlyúdob, and continually moving her head, began to talk.

'Why are you pleased to honour Dútlov with a visit, sir?'

'I want him to rent land from me, about thirty desyatins,<sup>1</sup> and start a farm, and also buy a forest jointly with me. You see he has money, so why should it lie idle? What do you think of it, nurse?'

'Well, why not? Of course, sir, everyone knows that the Dútlovs are strong people. I reckon he's the leading peasant on the whole estate,' the nurse answered, swaying her head. 'Last year they put up another building with their own timber, without troubling you. They must have at least eighteen

<sup>1</sup> A desyatín is nearly two and three-quarter acres.

horses, apart from foals and colts, and as to cattle and sheep—when the women go out into the street to drive them in it's a sight to see how they crowd the gateway, and they must also have two hundred hives of bees if not more. Dútlov is a very strong peasant and must have money.'

'Do you think he has much money?' asked Nekhlyúdob.

'People say—it may be their spite—that the old man has a good lot of money. Naturally he won't talk about it or tell his sons, but he must have. Why shouldn't he be interested in a forest? Unless he may be afraid of the talk spreading of his having money. Some five years back he took up meadows in a small way, in shares with Shkálík, the inn-keeper, but either Shkálík swindled him or something happened, and the old man lost some three hundred rubles and since then he has given it up. How can they help being well-to-do, your Excellency?' the nurse went on. 'They have three allotments of lands, a big family all of them workers, and the old man himself—there's no denying it—is a capital manager. He has such luck everywhere that people all wonder; what with his grain, his horses, and cattle, and bees, and his sons. He's got them all married now. He used to find wives for them among our own people, but now he's got Ilyúshka married to a free girl—he paid for her emancipation himself—and she, too, has turned out well.'

'And do they live peaceably?'

'Where there's a real head to a house there's always peace. Take the Dútlovs—of course the daughters-in-law have words behind the oven, but with their father at the head the sons live in unity all the same.'

The nurse paused a little.

'It seems that the old man wants to make his eldest son Karp head of the house now. "I am getting old," he says. "My place is to see to the bees." Well, Karp is a good peasant, a careful peasant, but all the same he won't be anything like the old man was as a manager—he hasn't the same sense.'

'Then Karp may like to take up the land and the forest. What do you think?' Nekhlyúdob asked, wishing to get from his nurse all that she knew about her neighbours.

'Scarcely, sir,' she replied. 'The old man hasn't told his son anything about his money. As long as he lives and the money is in his house, the old man will control things; besides, they go in chiefly for carting.'

'And you think the old man won't consent?'

'He will be afraid.'

'But what of?'

'But how can a serf belonging to a master let it be known what he has got, sir? In a hapless hour he might lose all his money! When he went into business with the inn-keeper and made a mistake, how could he go to law with him? So the money was lost. And with his proprietor he'd get settled at once.'

'Oh, is that it? . . .' said Nekhlyúdob flushing.

'Well, good-bye nurse.'

'Good-bye, dear sir, your Excellence. Thank you kindly.'

## CHAPTER XIV

'HADN'T I better go home?' thought Nekhlyúdob as he approached Dútlav's gate, feeling an indefinite sadness and moral weariness.

But at that moment the new plank gates opened before him with a creak, and in the gateway



appeared a handsome, ruddy, fair-haired lad of eighteen dressed as a stage-coach-driver and leading three strong-limbed shaggy horses, which were still perspiring. Briskly shaking back his flaxen hair he bowed to the master.

'Is your father at home, Ilyá?' asked Nekhlyúdob.

'He's in the apiary at the back of the yard,' replied the lad, leading one horse after the other out through the half-open gate.

'No, I'll keep to my intention and make him the offer, and do what depends on me,' Nekhlyúdob thought, and letting the horses pass out he entered Dútlov's large yard. He could see that the manure had recently been carted away: the earth was still dark and damp, and here and there, especially by the gateway, lay bits of reddish, fibrous manure. In the yard and under the high penthouse stood many carts, ploughs, sledges, troughs, tubs, and peasant property of all kinds, in good order. Pigeons flew about and cooed in the shade under the broad strong rafters. There was a smell of manure and tar in the place. In one corner Karp and Ignát were fixing a new transom under a large iron-bound three-horse cart. Dútlov's three sons all bore a strong family resemblance. The youngest, Ilyá, whom Nekhlyúdob had met by the gate, had no beard and was shorter, ruddier, and more smartly dressed than the others. The second, Ignát, was taller, darker, had a pointed beard, and though also wearing boots, a driver's shirt, and a felt hat, had not such a festive and carefree appearance as his younger brother. The eldest, Karp, was still taller, and was wearing bast shoes, a grey coat, and a shirt without gussets. He had a large red beard and looked not only serious but almost gloomy.

'Shall I send father to you, your Excellence?' he

asked, coming up to his master and awkwardly making a slight bow.

'No, I'll go myself to the apiary and see his arrangements there . . . but I want to speak to you,' said Nekhlyúdob stepping to the opposite side of the yard so that Ignát should not hear what he was about to say to Karp.

The self-confidence of these two peasants and a certain pride in their deportment, as well as what his nurse had told him, so embarrassed the young master that he did not find it easy to speak of the business he had in mind. He had a sort of guilty feeling and it seemed to him easier to speak to one brother out of hearing of the others. Karp seemed surprised that the master should take him aside, but followed him.

'This is what it is,' Nekhlyúdob began hesitatingly. 'I wanted to ask, have you many horses?'

'We can muster five tróyka teams, and there are some foals too,' Karp answered readily, scratching his back.

'Do your brothers drive the stage-coach?'

'We drive stage-coaches with three tróykas, and Ilyá has been away carting; he's only just back.'

'And does that pay? What do you earn by it?'

'Earnings, your Excellence? At most we feed ourselves and the horses—and thank God for that.'

'Then why don't you take up something else? You might buy some forest or rent land.'

'Of course, your Excellence, we might rent land if there were any handy.'

'That is what I want to propose to you. Instead of the carting business that does no more than keep you, why not rent some thirty desyatíns of land from me? I'll let you have that whole strip beyond Sáfov and you could start your own farming on a large scale.'

And Nekhlyúdov, carried away by the plan for a peasant farm which he had repeatedly thought out and considered, went on to explain his offer, no longer hesitatingly. Karp listened very attentively to his master's words.

'We are very grateful to your honour,' he said when Nekhlyúdov, having finished, looked at him inquiringly expecting an answer. 'Of course it is not a bad plan. It's better for a peasant to work on the land than to drive with a whip in his hand. Getting among strangers and seeing all sorts of people, the likes of us get spoilt. There is nothing better for a peasant than to work the land.'

'Then what do you think of it?'

'As long as father is alive what can I think, your Excellence? It is as he pleases.'

'Take me to the apiary. I'll talk to him.'

'This way, please,' said Karp, walking slowly towards the barn at the back. He opened a low door that led to the apiary, and having let his master pass, and shut the door behind him, returned to Ignát and silently resumed his interrupted work.

## CHAPTER XV

NEKHLÝÚDOV, stooping, passed from under the shade of the penthouse through the low doorway to the apiary beyond the yard. Symmetrically placed hives covered with pieces of board stood in a small space surrounded by a loosely-woven fence of straw and wattle. Golden bees circled noisily round the hives, and the place was flooded by the hot brilliant beams of the June sun. From the door a trodden path led to a wooden shrine on which stood a small tinsel-faced icon which glittered in the sunlight. Several graceful young lime trees, stretching their curly crowns above the thatch of the neighbouring

Building, mingled the just audible rustle of their fresh dark-green foliage with the humming of the bees. On the fine curly grass that crept in between the hives lay black and sharply defined shadows of the roofed fence, of the lime trees, and of the hives with their board roofs. At the door of a freshly-thatched wooden shed that stood among the limes could be seen the short, bent figure of an old man whose uncovered grey head, with a bald patch, shone in the sun. On hearing the creak of the door the old man turned and, wiping his perspiring sunburnt face with the skirt of his smock, came with a mild and pleasant smile to meet his master.

It was so cosy, pleasant, and quiet in the sun-lit apiary; the grey-haired old man with the fine, close wrinkles radiating from his eyes who, with large shoes on his bare feet, came waddling and smiling with good-natured self-satisfaction to welcome his master to his own private domain, was so simple-hearted and kind that Nekhlyúdob immediately forgot the unpleasant impressions he had received that morning, and his cherished dream vividly recurred to him. He saw all his peasants as well off and kindly as old Dútlov, and all smiling happily and affectionately at him because they were indebted to him alone for their wealth and happiness.

'Wouldn't you like a net, your Excellence? The bees are angry now, and sting,' said the old man, taking down from the fence a dirty linen bag attached to a bark hoop and smelling of honey, and offering it to his master. 'The bees know me and don't sting me,' he added with the mild smile that seldom left his handsome sunburnt face.

'Then I don't want it either. Are they swarming yet?' Nekhlyúdob asked, also smiling, without knowing why.

'Hardly swarming, sir, Dmítri Nikoláevich,'

replied the old man, expressing a special endearment by addressing his master by his Christian name and patronymic. 'Why, they've only just begun to be active. You know what a cold spring it has been.'

'I have been reading in a book,' Nekhlyúdob began, driving off a bee which had got into his hair and buzzed just above his ear, 'that if the combs are placed straight up, fixed to little laths, the bees swarm earlier. For this purpose hives are made of boards with cross-pieces. . . .'

'Please don't wave your arm about, it makes them worse,' said the old man. 'Hadn't you better have the net?'

Nekhlyúdob was in pain; but a certain childish vanity made him reluctant to own it, and so he again declined the net and continued to tell the old man about the construction of beehives of which he had read in *Maison Rustique* and in which, he believed, there would be twice as many swarms; but a bee stung him on the neck and he grew confused and hesitated in the midst of his description.

'It's true, sir, Dmítri Nikoláevich,' said the old man, looking with fatherly condescension at his master, 'people do write in books. But it may be that it is written wrongly. Perhaps they say "he'll do as we advise, and then we'll laugh at him." That does happen! How can one teach the bees where to build their comb? They do it themselves according to the hive, sometimes across it and sometimes lengthways. There, please look in,' he added, opening one of the nearest hives and looking into the opening where buzzing bees were crawling about on the crooked combs. 'These are young ones: they have their mind on the queen bee, but they make the comb straight or to one side as best fits the hive,' continued the old man, evidently carried away by his favourite subject and not

noticing his master's condition. 'See, they're coming in laden to-day. It's a warm day and everything can be seen,' he added, closing the opening and pressing a crawling bee with a rag and then with his hand brushing several from his wrinkled neck. The bees did not sting him, but Nekhlyúdob could hardly refrain from running away from the apiary: they had stung him in three places and were buzzing all round his head and neck.

'How many hives have you?' he asked, stepping back towards the door.

'As many as God has given,' replied Dútlov laughingly. 'One mustn't count them, sir. The bees don't like it. There now, your Excellence, I wanted to ask your honour something,' he continued, pointing to some narrow hives standing near the fence. It's about Ósip, your nurse's husband—if you would only speak to him. It's wrong to act so to a neighbour in one's own village.'

'What is bad? . . . Oh, but they do sting!' said the master, with his hand already on the door-handle.

'Well, you see, every year he lets his bees out among my young ones. They ought to have a chance to improve, but the strange bees enter the combs and take the wax from them,' said the old man, not noticing his master's grimaces.

'All right . . . afterwards . . . in a moment . . .' muttered Nekhlyúdob, and unable to bear the pain any longer he ran quickly through the door waving both hands.

'Rub it with earth and it will be all right,' said the old man, following the master into the yard. The master rubbed the places that had been stung with earth, flushed as he gave a quick glance at Karp and Ignát, who were not looking at him, and frowned angrily.

## CHAPTER XVI

'WHAT I wanted to ask your Excellency,' . . . said the old man, pretending not to notice or really not noticing his master's angry look.

'What?'

'Well, you see, we are well off for horses, thank God, and have a labourer, so that the owner's work will not be neglected by us.'

'Well, what about it?'

'If you would be so kind as to accept quit-rent and excuse my lads from service, Ilyá and Ignát could go carting all summer with three teams of horses, and might earn something.'

'Where would they go?'

'Well, that all depends,' interposed Ilyá who had tied the horses under the penthouse and came up to his father. 'The Kadmínski lads went to Rómen with eight tróykas and earned their keep and brought back about thirty rubles for each tróyka; or there's Odessa where they say fodder is cheap.'

'That's what I wanted to talk to you about,' said the master, turning to the old man and trying tactfully to introduce the question of farming. 'Tell me, is it more profitable to go carting than to farm at home?'

'Much more profitable, your Excellence,' Ilyá again broke in, vigorously shaking back his hair. 'At home we've no fodder for the horses.'

'And how much will you earn in a summer?'

'Well, after the spring—though fodder was dear—we carted goods to Kiev and loaded up grits for Moscow in Kursk, and kept ourselves, fed the horses well, and brought fifteen rubles home.'

'There's no harm in working at an honest job be it what it may,' said the master, again addressing the old man, 'but it seems to me that other work

might be found. This carting work makes a young fellow go anywhere and see all sorts of people and he may get spoilt,' he added, repeating Karp's words.

'What are we peasants to take up, if not carting?' rejoined the old man, with a mild smile. 'On a good carting job a man has enough to eat himself, and the horses have enough. As to getting spoilt, it's not the first time the lads have been carting, and I used to go myself and got nothing bad from anyone—nothing but good.'

'There's plenty of work you could do at home: land, meadows . . .'

'How could we, your Excellency?' Ilyá interrupted with animation. 'We are born to this, we know all about it, it's suitable work for us: the pleasantest work for us, your Excellence, is carting.'

'May we ask your Excellence to do us the honour to come to the hut? You have not been there since our house-warming,' said the old man, bowing low and making a sign to his son. Ilyá raced into the hut and the old man followed with Nekhlyúdob.

## CHAPTER XVII

On entering the hut the old man bowed again, dusted the front bench with the skirt of his smock, and asked with a smile:

'What may I offer your Excellency?'

The hut was clean and roomy, with sleeping places near the ceiling, and bunks. It also had a chimney. The fresh aspen logs, between which the moss-caulking could be seen, had not yet turned dark; the new benches and sleeping places had not yet worn smooth, and the earthen floor was not yet trodden hard. Ilyá's wife, a thin young peasant woman with a dreamy oval face, sat on a bunk and rocked a cradle that hung by a long pole from the



ceiling. In the cradle, breathing softly, lay an infant with eyes closed and outstretched limbs. Karp's wife, a plump, red-cheeked woman, stood by the oven shredding onions over a wooden bowl, her sleeves turned up above her elbows, showing her hands and arms tanned to above her wrists. A pock-marked pregnant woman stood beside the oven hiding her face with her sleeve. It was hot in the hut, for besides the heat of the sun there was the heat of the oven, and there was a strong smell of freshly-baked bread. From the sleeping places aloft two fair-haired little boys and a girl, who had climbed up there while awaiting dinner, looked down with curiosity on the master.

The sight of this prosperity pleased Nekhlyúdob and yet he felt embarrassed in the presence of these women and children, who were all looking at him. He sat down on the bench, blushing.

'Give me a bit of hot bread, I like it,' he said, and flushed still more.

Karp's wife cut off a big bit, and handed it to the master on a plate. Nekhlyúdob said nothing, not knowing what to say; the women were also silent, and the old man kept mildly smiling.

'Really now, what am I ashamed of—just as if I had done something wrong?' thought Nekhlyúdob. 'Why shouldn't I suggest their starting a farm? What stupidity. . .!' Yet he still kept silent.

'Well, sir, how about the lads? What are your orders?' said the old man.

'Well I should advise you not to let them go but to find them work here,' Nekhlyúdob said, suddenly gaining courage. 'Do you know what I have thought of for you? Join me in buying a grove in the State forest, and some land too.'

'How could I, your Excellence? Where is the money to come from?' the old man interrupted him.

'Only a small grove, you know, for about two hundred rubles,' Nekhlyúdob remarked.

The old man smiled grimly.

'If I had the money, why not buy it?' he said.

'Have you no longer that amount?' said the master reproachfully.

'Oh sir, your Excellence!' said the old man in a sorrowful voice, looking towards the door. 'I have enough to do to keep the family. It's not for us to buy groves.'

'But you have the money, why should it lie idle?' insisted Nekhlyúdob.

The old man suddenly became greatly agitated; his eyes glittered and his shoulders began to twitch.

'Maybe evil persons have said it of me,' he began in a trembling voice, 'but believe me, I say before God,' he went on, becoming more and more excited and turning towards the icon, 'may my eyes burst, may I fall through the ground here, if I have anything but the fifteen rubles Ilyá brought home and even then I have the poll-tax to pay. You know yourself we have built the cottage . . .'

'Well, all right, all right!' said the master, rising. 'Good-bye, friends.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

'My God, my God!' thought Nekhlyúdob as he walked home with big strides through the shady avenues of his neglected garden, absent-mindedly plucking twigs and leaves on his way. 'Can it be that all my dreams of the aims and duties of my life are mere nonsense? When I planned this path of life I fancied that I should always experience the complete moral satisfaction I felt when the idea first occurred to me—so why do I now feel so

depressed and sad and dissatisfied with myself?' And he remembered with extraordinary vividness and distinctness that happy moment a year before.

He had got up very early that May morning, before anyone else in the house, feeling painfully agitated by the secret, unformulated impulses of youth, and had gone first into the garden and then into the forest, where he wandered about alone amid the vigorous, luscious, yet peaceful works of nature, suffering from an exuberance of vague feeling and finding no expression for it. With all the charm of the unknown his youthful imagination pictured to him the voluptuous form of a woman, and it seemed to him that here it was—the fulfilment of that unexpressed desire. But some other, deeper feeling told him: 'Not that,' and impelled him to seek something else. Then his inexperienced, ardent mind, rising higher and higher into realms of abstraction, discovered, as it seemed to him, the laws of being, and he dwelt on those thoughts with proud delight. But again a higher feeling told him: 'Not that,' and once more agitated him and forced him to continue his search. Empty of thought and feeling—a condition which always follows intensive activity—he lay on his back under a tree and began to gaze at the translucent morning clouds drifting across the limitless blue sky above him. Suddenly without any reason tears filled his eyes and, Heaven knows why, a definite thought to which he clung with delight entered his mind, filling his whole soul—the thought that love and goodness are truth and happiness—the only truth and the only happiness possible in the world. And this time his deeper feeling did not say: 'Not that,' and he rose and began to verify this new thought. 'This is it! This! So it is!' he said to himself in ecstasy, looking at all the phenomena of life in the

ght of this newly-discovered and as it seemed to him perfectly novel truth, which displaced his former convictions. 'What rubbish is all I knew and loved and believed in,' he said to himself. 'Love, self-denial—that is the only true happiness—a happiness independent of chance!' and he smiled and flourished his arms. Applying this thought to all sides of life and finding it confirmed by life as well as by the inner voice which told him, 'This is it,' he experienced a new sensation of joyful agitation and delight. 'And so, to be happy I must do good,' he thought, and his whole future presented itself to him no longer in the abstract, but in vivid pictures of a landed proprietor's life.

He saw before him an immense field of action for his whole life, which he would devote to well-doing and in which consequently he would be happy. There was no need to search for a sphere of activity: it lay ready before him; he had a direct duty—he owned serfs. . . . And what a joyful and grateful task lay before him! 'To influence this simple, receptive, unperverted class of people; to save them from poverty, give them a sufficiency, transmit to them an education which fortunately I possess, to reform their vices arising from ignorance and superstition, to develop their morality, to make them love the right. . . . What a brilliant, happy future! And I, who do it all for my own happiness, shall in return enjoy their gratitude, and see myself advancing day by day further and further towards the appointed aim. A marvellous future! How could I have failed to see it before?'

'And besides all that,' he thought at the same time, 'What prevents my being happy in the love of a woman, in the joys of family life?' And his youthful imagination painted a still more enchanting future. 'I and my wife, whom I love as no one

ever before loved anyone in the world, will always live amid this peaceful poetic nature, with our children and perhaps with my old aunt. We have our mutual love, our love for our children, and we both know that our aim is to do good. We help each other to move towards that goal. I shall make general arrangements, give general and just assistance, carry on the farm, a savings-bank and workshops, while she, with her pretty little head, wearing a simple white dress which she lifts above her dainty foot, walks through the mud to the peasant school, to the infirmary, to some unfortunate peasant who strictly speaking does not deserve aid, and everywhere brings consolation and help. The children, the old men, and the old women, adore her and look on her as an angel—as Providence. Then she returns, and conceals from me the fact that she has been to see the unfortunate peasant and given him some money; but I know it all and embrace her tightly, and firmly and tenderly kiss her lovely eyes, her shyly blushing cheeks, and her smiling rosy lips.'

## CHAPTER XIX

'WHERE are those dreams?' thought the young man now as he neared his house after his visits. 'For more than a year I have been seeking happiness in that way, and what have I found? It is true I sometimes feel that I have a right to be satisfied with myself, but it is a dry, reasoning sort of satisfaction. No, that is not true, I am simply dissatisfied with myself! I am dissatisfied because I do not find happiness here, and I long for happiness so passionately. I have not only experienced no enjoyment, I have cut myself off from all that gives it. Why? What for? Who is the better for it? My

## A LANDLORD'S MORNING

unt was right when she wrote that it is easier to find happiness for oneself than to give it to others. Have my peasants grown richer? Are they more educated or morally more developed? Not at all! They are no better off, and it grows harder for me every day. If I saw my plans succeeding, or met with any gratitude . . . but no, I see a false routine, vice, suspicion, helplessness. I am wasting the best years of my life in vain,' he thought, and remembered that he had heard from his nurse that his neighbours called him a whipper-snapper; that he had no money left in the counting-house, that his newly-introduced threshing machine, to the general amusement of the peasants, had only whistled and had not threshed anything when for the first time it was started at the threshing-floor before a large audience; and that he had to expect officials from the Land Court any day to take an inventory of his estate because, tempted by different new undertakings, he had let the payments on his mortgage lapse. And suddenly, as vividly as the walk in the forest and the dream of a landlord's life had presented themselves to his mind before, so now did his little room in Moscow, where as a student he had sat late at night, by the light of one candle, with his beloved sixteen-year-old friend and comrade. They had read and repeated some dry notes on civic law for five hours on end, and having finished them had sent for supper and gone shares in the price of a bottle of champagne, and discussed the future awaiting them. How very different the future had appeared to the young student! Then it had been full of enjoyment, of varied activities, of brilliant success, and indubitably led them both to what then seemed the greatest blessing in the world—fame!

'He is already getting on, rapidly getting on,

along that road,' thought Nekhlyúdob of his friend 'while I . . .'

But by this time he was already approaching the porch of his house, where ten or more peasant- and domestic-serfs stood awaiting him with various requests, and his dreams were replaced by realities.

There was a tattered, dishevelled, blood-stained peasant woman who complained with tears that her father-in-law wanted to kill her: there were two brothers, who for two years had been quarrelling about the division of a peasant farm between them, and now stood gazing at one another with desperate hatred: and there was an unshaven grey-headed domestic serf, with hands trembling from drunkenness, whom his son, the gardener, had brought to the master with a complaint of his depraved conduct: there was a peasant who had turned his wife out of the house because she had not worked all spring: and there was his wife, a sick woman who did not speak, but sat on the grass near the entrance, sobbing and showing an inflamed and swollen leg roughly bandaged with dirty rags. . . .

Nekhlyúdob listened to all the petitions and complaints, and having given advice to some, settled the disputes of others, and made promises to yet others, went to his room with a mixed feeling of weariness, shame, helplessness, and remorse.

## CHAPTER XX

IN the room occupied by Nekhlyúdob—which was not a large one—there was an old leather couch studded with brass nails, several armchairs of a similar kind, an old-fashioned carved and inlaid card-table with a brass rim, which stood open and on which were some papers, and an open, old-fashioned English grand piano with a yellowish

case and worn and warped narrow keys. Between the windows hung a large mirror in an old gilt carved frame. On the floor beside the table lay bundles of papers, books, and accounts. In general the whole room had a disorderly and characterless appearance, and this air of untidy occupancy formed a sharp contrast to the stiff, old-fashioned aristocratic arrangement of the other rooms of the large house.

On entering the room Nekhlyúdob angrily flung his hat on the table and sat down on a chair before the piano, crossing his legs and hanging his head.

'Will you have lunch, your Excellence?' asked a tall, thin, wrinkled old woman who entered the room in a cap, a print dress, and a large shawl.

Nekhlyúdob turned to look at her and was silent for a moment as if considering something.

'No, I don't want any, nurse,' he said, and again sank into thought.

The old nurse shook her head at him with vexation, and sighed.

'Eh, Dmitri Nikoláevich, why are you moping? There are worse troubles! It will pass—be sure it will . . .'

'But I'm not moping. What has put that into your head, Malánya Finogénovna?' replied Nekhlyúdob trying to smile.

'How can you help moping—don't I see?' the old nurse retorted warmly. 'All alone the whole day long. And you take everything so to heart and see to everything yourself—and now you hardly eat anything. Is it reasonable? If only you went to town or visited your neighbours, but who ever saw the likes of this? You are young to trouble so about everything. . . . Excuse me, master, I'll sit down,' she continued, taking a chair near the door. 'Why, you've been so indulgent with them that they're not



afraid of anyone. Does a master behave like that? There is nothing good in it; you only ruin yourself and let the people get spoilt. Our people are like that; they don't understand it—really they don't. You might at least go to see your aunt. What she wrote was true . . . ' she ended admonishingly.

Nekhlyúdob grew more and more dejected. He wearily touched the keys with his right hand, his elbow resting on his knee. Some sort of chord resulted, then another, and another. . . . He drew up his chair, took his other hand out of his pocket and began to play. The chords he struck were sometimes unprepared and not even quite correct; they were often trivial and commonplace, and did not indicate that he had any musical talent, but this occupation gave him a kind of indefinite, melancholy pleasure. At every change of harmony he waited with bated breath to see how it would resolve itself, and when a fresh harmony resulted his imagination vaguely supplied what was lacking. It seemed to him that he heard hundreds of melodies: a chorus and an orchestra in conformity with his harmony. What chiefly gave him pleasure was the intensified activity of his imagination which incoherently and fragmentarily, but with amazing clearness, presented him with the most varied, confused, and absurd pictures and images of the past and the future. Now it was the plump figure of White David responding to torment and privation with patience and submission: he saw his round shoulders, his immense hands covered with white hair, and his white lashes fluttering timidly at the sight of his mother's brown sinewy fist. Then he saw his self-confident wet-nurse, emboldened by residence at the master's house, and he imagined her for some reason going about the village and preaching to the serfs that they should hide their

money from the landlord, and he unconsciously repeated to himself: 'Yes, one must hide one's money from the landlord.' Then suddenly the small brown head of his future wife—for some reason in tears—presented itself to him, resting on his shoulder. Then he saw Chúris's kindly blue eyes looking tenderly at his pot-bellied little son. 'Yes, he sees in him not only a son, but a helper and deliverer. That is love!' whispered Nekhlyúdob to himself. Then he remembered Epifán's mother and the patient, all-forgiving expression he had noticed on her aged face in spite of her one protruding tooth and ugly features. 'Probably I am the first person in the whole seventy years of her life to notice that,' he thought, and whispering, 'Strange!' he unconsciously continued to touch the keys and listen to the sounds they produced. Then he vividly recalled his flight from the apiary and the expression on Ignát's and Karp's faces when they obviously wanted to laugh but pretended not to see him. He blushed, and involuntarily looked round at his nurse, who was still sitting silently by the door gazing intently at him and occasionally shaking her grey head. Then suddenly he seemed to see three sweating horses, and Ilyá's fine powerful figure with his fair curls, his merrily beaming narrow blue eyes, his fresh ruddy cheeks, and the light-coloured down just beginning to appear on his lips and chin. He remembered how afraid Ilyá had been that he would not be allowed to go carting, and how warmly he had pleaded for that favourite job; and he suddenly saw a grey, misty early morning, a slippery highway and a long row of three-horsed carts, loaded high and covered by bast-matting marked with big black lettering. The strong-limbed, well-fed horses, bending their backs, tugging at the traces and jingling their bells, pull

evenly uphill, tenaciously gripping the slippery road with their rough-shod hoofs. Rapidly descending the hill a mail-coach gallops towards the train of loaded carts, jingling its bells which re-echo far into the depth of the forest that extends along both sides of the road.

'Hey, hey, hey!' shouts the driver of the first cart in a boyish voice. He has a brass number-plate on his felt hat and flourishes his whip above his head.

Karp, with his red beard and gloomy looks, strides heavily in his huge boots beside the front wheel of the first cart. From the second cart Ilyá thrusts his handsome head out from under a piece of matting where he has been getting pleasantly warm in the early sunlight. Three tróykas loaded with boxes dash by with rattling wheels, jingling bells, and shouts. Ilyá again hides his handsome head under the matting and drops asleep. And now it is evening, clear and warm. The boarded gates open with a creak for the weary tróykas crowded together in the station yard, and one after another the high, mat-covered carts jolt over the board that lies in the gateway and come to rest under the roomy penthouse. Ilyá gaily exchanges greetings with the fair-faced, broad-bosomed hostess, who asks, 'Have you come far? And how many of you will want supper?' and with her bright kindly eyes looks with pleasure at the handsome lad. Now having seen to his horses he goes into the hot crowded house, crosses himself, sits down before a full wooden bowl, and chats merrily with the landlady and his comrades. And here, under the penthouse, is his place for the night, where the open starry sky is visible and where he will lie on the scented hay near the horses, which changing from foot to foot and snorting pick out the fodder from the wooden mangers. He goes up to the hay, turns

to the east and, crossing his broad powerful chest some thirty times and shaking back his fair curls, repeats 'Our Father' and 'Lord have mercy!' some twenty times, covers himself head and all with his coat, and falls into the healthy careless sleep of strong young manhood. And now he dreams of the towns: Kiev with its saints and throngs of pilgrims, Rómen with its traders and merchandise, Odessa and the distant blue sea with its white sails, and Tsargrad<sup>1</sup> with its golden houses and white-breasted, dark-browed Turkish women--and thither he flies lifted on invisible wings. He flies freely and easily further and further, and sees below him golden cities bathed in bright radiance, and the blue sky with its many stars, and the blue sea with its white sails, and it is gladsome and gay to fly on further and further. . . .

'Splendid!' Nekhlyúdob whispered to himself, and the thought came to him: 'Why am I not Ilyá?'

<sup>1</sup> Constantinople.



# LUCERNE



## LUCERNE

[*From Prince Nekhlyúdov's Memoirs.*]

8th July, 1857.

**L**AST night I arrived at Lucerne, and put up at the Schweizerhof, the best hotel.

Lucerne, an ancient town and the capital of the canton, situated on the shore of the Lake of Lucerne, says Murray, is one of the most romantic places in Switzerland: here three important high roads meet, and it is only one hour by steam-boat to Mount Rigi, from which one of the most magnificent views in the world can be seen.

Whether this be right or not, other guide-books say the same, and so tourists of all nationalities, specially the English, flock there.

The magnificent five-storied Schweizerhof Hotel has been recently erected on the quay, close to the lake at the very place where of old there was a roofed and crooked bridge<sup>1</sup> with chapels at its corners and carvings on its beams. Now, thanks to the enormous influx of English people, their needs, their tastes, and their money, the old bridge has been torn down and a granite quay, as straight as a stick, erected, on which straight, rectangular, five-storied houses have been built, in front of which two rows of little lindens with stakes to them have been planted, between which the usual small green benches have been placed. This is a promenade, and here Englishwomen wearing Swiss straw hats, and Englishmen in stout and comfortable clothes, walk about enjoying the work they have inspired. Perhaps such quays and houses and lime trees and Englishmen are all very well in some places, but

<sup>1</sup> The Hofbrücke, removed in 1852.



not here amid this strangely majestic and yet inexpressibly genial and harmonious Nature.

When I went up to my room and opened the window facing the lake I was at first literally blinded and shaken by the beauty of that water, those mountains, and the sky. I felt an inward restlessness and a need to find expression for the emotion that filled my soul to overflowing. At that moment I felt a wish to embrace someone, to hug him closely, to tickle and pinch him—in a word to do something extraordinary to myself and to him.

It was past six and had rained all day, but was now beginning to clear up. The lake, light-blue like burning sulphur, and dotted with little boats which left vanishing tracks behind them, spread out before my windows motionless, smooth, and apparently convex between its variegated green shores, then passed into the distance where it narrowed between two enormous promontories, and, darkening, leaned against and disappeared among the pile of mountains, clouds, and glaciers, that towered one above the other. In the foreground were the moist, fresh-green, far-stretching shores with their reeds, meadows, gardens, and chalets; further off were dark-green wooded promontories crowned by ruined castles; in the background was the rugged, purple-white distance with its fantastic, rocky, dull-white, snow-covered mountain crests, the whole bathed in the delicate, transparent azure of the air and lit up by warm sunset rays that pierced the torn clouds. Neither on the lake nor on the mountains, nor in the sky, was there a single precise line, or one precise colour, or one unchanging moment: everywhere was motion, irregularity, fantastic shapes, an endless intermingling and variety of shades and lines, and over it all lay tranquillity, softness, unity, and inevitable beauty.

## LUCERNE

And here, before my very window, amid this undefined, confused, unfettered beauty, the straight white line of the quay stretched stupidly and artificially, with its lime trees, their supports, and the green benches—miserable, vulgar human productions which did not blend with the general harmony and beauty as did the distant chalets and ruins, but on the contrary clashed coarsely with it. My eyes continually encountered that dreadfully straight quay, and I felt a desire to push it away or demolish it, as one would wipe off a black smudge that disfigured the nose just under one's eye. But the embankment with the English people walking about on it remained where it was, and I instinctively tried to find a point of view from which it would not be visible. I found a way to do this, and sat till dinner-time all alone, enjoying the incomplete, but all the more tormentingly sweet feeling one experiences when one gazes in solitude on the beauty of Nature.

At half-past seven I was called to dinner. In the large, splendidly decorated room on the ground floor two tables were laid for at least a hundred persons. For about three minutes the silent movement of assembling visitors continued—the rustle of women's dresses, light footsteps, whispered discussions with the very polite and elegant waiters—but at last all the seats were occupied by men and women very well and even richly and generally most immaculately dressed. As usual in Switzerland the majority of the visitors were English, and therefore the chief characteristic of the common table was the strict decorum they regard as an obligation—a reserve not based on pride, but on the absence of any necessity for social intercourse, and on content with the comfortable and agreeable satisfaction of their requirements. On all sides gleamed the

whitest of laces, the whitest of collars, the whitest<sup>in</sup> of teeth—natural or artificial—and the whitest of complexions and hands. But the faces, many of them very handsome, expressed only a consciousness of their own well-being and a complete lack of interest in all that surrounded them unless it directly concerned themselves; and the whitest of hands in rings and mittens moved only to adjust a collar, to cut up beef, or to lift a wine glass: no mental emotion was reflected in their movements. Occasionally families would exchange a few words among themselves in subdued voices about the pleasant flavour of this or that dish or wine, or the lovely view from Mount Rigi. Individual tourists, men and women, sat beside one another not even exchanging a look. If occasionally some two among these hundred people spoke to one another it was sure to be about the weather and the ascent of Mount Rigi. Knives and forks moved on the plates with scarcely any sound, food was taken a little at a time, peas and other vegetables were invariably eaten with a fork. The waiters, involuntarily subdued by the general silence, asked in a whisper what wine you would take. At such dinners I always feel depressed, uncomfortable, and at last melancholy. I always feel as if I were guilty of something and am being punished, as I used to be when, as a child, I was put in a chair when I had been naughty, and ironically told: 'Rest yourself, my dear!' while my youthful blood surged in my veins and I heard the merry shouts of my brothers in the next room. Formerly I tried to rebel against the feeling of oppression I experienced during such dinners, but in vain: all those inanimate countenances have an insuperable effect on me and I become similarly inanimate myself. I wish nothing, think nothing, and cease even to observe what is going on. At first I

used to try to talk to my neighbours; but except for phrases apparently repeated a hundred thousand times in the same place and by the same people I got no response. And yet not all these frozen people are stupid and unfeeling, on the contrary many of them, no doubt, have an inner life just such as my own, and in many of them it may be much more complex and interesting. Then why do they deprive themselves of one of life's greatest pleasures—the enjoyment that comes from the intercourse of man with man?

How different it was in our Paris *pension*, where some twenty of us, of various nationalities, professions, and dispositions, under the influence of French sociability used to meet at the common table as at a game! There, from one end of the table to the other, conversation, interspersed with jests and puns, even if in broken language, at once became general. There everyone, not troubling how it would sound, said anything that came into his head. There we had our philosopher, our debater, our *bel esprit*, and our butt, all in common. There immediately after dinner we pushed away the table and, in time and out, danced the polka on the dusty carpet till late in the evening. There, even if we were inclined to flirt and were not very clever or respectable, we were human beings. The Spanish countess with her romantic adventures, the Italian abbé who declaimed the *Divine Comedy* after dinner, the American doctor who had the entrée to the Tuileries, the young playwright with long hair, and the pianist who, according to her account, had composed the best polka in the world, the unhappy widow who was a beauty and had three rings on every finger—we all treated one another like human beings, in a friendly if superficial manner, and carried away, some of us light, and others sincere

and cordial, memories. But of these English at the *table d'hôte*, I often think as I look at all these silk<sup>1</sup> dresses, laces, ribbons, rings, and pommaded locks, how many live women would be happy and make others happy with these adornments. It is strange to think how many potential friends and lovers—very happy friends and lovers—may be sitting there side by side without knowing it, and, God knows why, will never know it and never give one another the happiness they desire so much and which they might so easily give.

I began to feel depressed, as always after such a dinner, and without finishing my dessert went in very low spirits to stroll about the town. The narrow, dirty, unlighted streets, the shops closing, the encounters I had with tipsy workmen and with women going bareheaded to fetch water, or others wearing hats who flitted along the walls of the side-streets and continually glanced round, not only did not dispel my ill-humour but even increased it. It had already grown quite dark in the streets when, without looking around me and without any thought in my head, I turned back to the hotel hoping by sleep to rid myself of my dismal frame of mind. I was feeling terribly chilled at heart, lonely and depressed, as sometimes happens without cause to those who have just arrived at a new place.

Looking at nothing but the ground at my feet I walked along the quay towards the Schweizerhof, when I was suddenly struck by the sound of some strange but exceedingly sweet and agreeable music. These sounds had an immediately vivifying effect on me, as if a bright cheerful light had penetrated my soul. I felt myself happy and cheerful. My dormant attention was again alive to all the objects surrounding me. The beauty of the night and of

the lake, to which I had been feeling indifferent, suddenly struck me joyfully like a novelty. In an instant I involuntarily noticed both the heavy grey patches of cloud on the dark blue of the sky lit up by the rising moon, the smooth dark-green lake with the little lights reflected on it, and the mist-covered mountains in the distance; I heard the croaking of the frogs from Freschenburg, and the fresh limpid whistle of quails on the opposite shore. But directly in front of me, on the spot whence the sounds to which my attention was chiefly directed came, I saw amid the semi-darkness a throng of people collected in a half-circle in the middle of the road, and at some short distance from them a tiny man in black clothes. Behind the people and the man the black poplars in the garden were gracefully silhouetted on the dark grey and blue ragged sky, and the severe spires on each side of the ancient cathedral towered majestically.

I drew nearer, the sounds became more distinct, and at some distance I could clearly distinguish the full chords of a guitar which vibrated sweetly in the evening air and several voices, which intercepting one another did not actually sing the melody but indicated it by chiming in at the chief passages. The tune was something in the nature of a charming and graceful mazurka. The voices sometimes seemed nearer and sometimes farther away; now you could hear a tenor, now a bass, and now a guttural falsetto with a warbling Tyrolese yodel. It was not a song, but the light, masterly sketch of a song. I could not make out what it was, but it was beautiful. The passionate soft chords of the guitar, that sweet gentle melody, and the lonely little figure of the man in black against the fantastic background of the dark lake, the gleaming moon, the two tall spires silently stretching upwards, and

the black poplars in the garden, were all strangely but inexpressibly beautiful, or so it seemed to me.

All the confused and arbitrary impressions of life suddenly received meaning and charm. It was as if a fresh and fragrant flower had bloomed within me. Instead of the weariness, dullness, and indifference towards everything in the world that I had felt a moment before, I suddenly experienced a need of love, a fullness of hope, and a spontaneous joy in life. 'What can I possibly want, what desire?' I involuntarily thought. 'Here it is all around me—beauty, poetry. Inhale full deep draughts of it with all the strength that is in you, enjoying it. What more do you need? It is all yours, and all good . . .'

I went nearer. The little man seemed to be an itinerant singer from the Tyrol. He stood before the windows of the hotel with one foot advanced, his head thrown back, and while thrumming his guitar was singing his graceful song in those different voices. I immediately felt an affection for him, and gratitude for the change he had brought about in me. As far as I could see, he was dressed in an old black coat, had short black hair, and wore a very ordinary old cap on his head. There was nothing artistic about his attire, but his jaunty, childishly merry pose and movements, with his diminutive stature, produced a touching yet amusing effect. On the steps, at the windows, and on the balconies of the brilliantly lighted hotel, stood ladies resplendent in full-skirted dresses, gentlemen with the whitest of collars, a porter and footmen in gold-embroidered liveries; in the street, in the semicircle of the crowd, and farther along the boulevard among the lime-trees, elegantly dressed waiters, cooks in the whitest of caps and blouses, girls with their arms around one another, and passers-by, had gathered and stopped. They all

seemed to experience the same sensation that I did, and stood in silence round the singer, listening attentively. All were quiet, only at intervals in the singing, from far away across the water came the rhythmic sound of a hammer, and from the Freschenburg shore the staccato trills of the frogs intermingling with the fresh, monotonous whistle of the quails.

In the darkness of the street the little man warbled like a nightingale, couplet after couplet and song after song. Though I had drawn close to him, his singing continued to give me great pleasure. His small voice was extremely pleasing, and the delicacy, the taste, and the sense of proportion with which he managed that voice were extraordinary, and showed immense natural gifts. He sang the refrain differently after each couplet and it was evident that all these graceful variations came to him freely and instantaneously.

Among the throng, above in the Schweizerhof and below on the boulevard, appreciative whispers could often be heard, and a respectful silence reigned. The balconies and windows kept filling, and by the hotel lights more and more elegantly dressed men and women could be seen leaning out picturesquely. The passers-by stopped and everywhere in the shadows on the embankment groups of men and women stood under the lime-trees. Near me, separated from the rest of the crowd and smoking cigars, stood an aristocratic waiter and the chef. The chef seemed to feel the charm of the music strongly and at every high falsetto note rapturously winked, nodded, and nudged the waiter in ecstatic perplexity, with a look that said: 'How he sings, eh?' The waiter, by whose broad smile I detected the pleasure the singing gave him, replied to the chef's nudgings by shrugging his



shoulders to show that it was hard to surprise him, and that he had heard much better things than this.

In an interval of the singing, while the singer was clearing his throat, I asked the waiter who the man was and whether he came there often.

'Well, he comes about twice a summer,' replied the waiter. 'He is from Aargau—just a beggar.'

'And are there many like him about?' I asked.

'Oh, yes,' replied the man not having at first understood what I was asking, but having afterwards made it out, he added: 'Oh no, he is the only one I know of. There are no others.'

Just then the little man, having finished his first song, briskly turned his guitar over and said something in his German patois, which I could not understand but which caused the crowd to laugh.

'What did he say?' I asked.

'He says his throat is dry and he would like some wine,' replied the waiter near me.

'Well, I suppose he is fond of drink.'

'Yes, such people are all like that,' answered the waiter with a depreciatory gesture of his hand.

The singer raised his cap and with a flourish of the guitar went up to the hotel. Throwing back his head he addressed the gentlefolk at the windows and on the balconies: '*Messieurs et Mesdames*,' he said with a half-Italian and half-German accent and the intonation conjurors employ when addressing their audience: '*Si vous croyez que je gagne quelque chose, vous vous trompez; je ne suis qu'un pauvre tiable.*'<sup>1</sup> He paused and waited a moment in silence, but as no one gave him anything, he again jerked his guitar and said: '*A présent, messieurs et mesdames, je vous chanterais l'air du Righi.*'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'If you think I earn anything you are mistaken. I am only a poor devil.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Now, gentlemen and ladies, I will sing you the Rigi song.'

The audience up above kept silent, but continued to stand in expectation of the next song; below, among the throng, there was laughter, probably because he expressed himself so queerly and because no one had given him anything. I gave him a few centimes, which he threw nimbly from one hand to the other, and put into his waistcoat pocket. Then putting on his cap again he began to sing a sweet and graceful Tyrolese song which he called '*l'air du Rhin*'. This song, which he had left to the last, was even better than the others, and on all sides among the now increased crowd one heard sounds of appreciation. He finished the song. Again he flourished his guitar, took off his cap, held it out, made two steps towards the windows, and again repeated his incomprehensible phrase: '*Messieurs et Mesdames, si vous croyez que je gagne quelque chose—*' which he evidently considered very smart and witty, but in his voice and movements I now detected a certain hesitation and childlike timidity which were the more noticeable on account of his small figure. The elegant audience still stood just as picturesquely grouped in the windows and on the balconies, the lights shining on their rich attire. A few of them talked in decorously subdued voices, apparently about the singer who was standing before them with outstretched hand, others looked with attentive curiosity down at the little black figure; on one balcony could be heard a young girl's merry laughter.

In the crowd below the talking and laughter grew louder and louder. The singer repeated his phrase a third time, in a still feebler voice, and this time he did not even finish it, but again held out his cap, and then drew it back immediately. And for the second time not one of those hundreds of brilliantly dressed people who had come to hear him threw

him a single penny. The crowd laughed unmercifully. The little singer seemed to me to shrink still more into himself. He took the guitar in his other hand, lifted his cap above his head, and said: '*Messieurs et Mesdames, je vous remercie, et je vous souhaite une bonne nuit.*'<sup>1</sup> Then he replaced his cap. The crowd roared with merry laughter. The handsome men and women, quietly conversing, gradually disappeared from the balconies. The strolls on the boulevard were resumed. The street that had been quiet during the singing again became animated, only a few persons looked at the singer from a distance and laughed. I heard the little man mutter something to himself. He turned and, seeming to grow still smaller, went quickly towards the town. The merry strollers, still watching him, followed him at a certain distance, and laughed.

My mind was in a whirl. I was at a loss to understand what it all meant, and without moving from the spot where I had been, I senselessly gazed into the darkness after the tiny retreating figure of the man as he went striding rapidly towards the town and at the laughing strollers who followed him. I felt pained, grieved, and above all ashamed for the little man, for the crowd, and for myself, as if it were I who had been asking for money and had received nothing, and had been laughed at. I, too, without looking back and with an aching heart, moved off with rapid steps and went to the entrance of the Schweizerhof. I could not yet account for my emotions, but only knew that something heavy and unsolved filled my heart and oppressed me.

At the brilliantly lit entrance I met the hall porter who politely stepped aside, and an English family. A tall, portly, handsome man with black side-whiskers worn in the English fashion, a black hat on

<sup>1</sup> 'Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I wish you good-night.'

his head, a plaid over his arm, and an expensive cane in his hand, was walking with lazy self-confidence arm in arm with a lady in a grey silk gown, and a cap trimmed with bright ribbons and exquisite lace. Beside them walked a pretty, fresh-complexioned girl wearing a graceful Swiss hat trimmed with a feather *à la Mousquetaire*, and with charming long soft flaxen curls that fell over her fair face. In front of them skipped a ten-year-old girl with rosy cheeks, and plump white knees showing from under the finest embroideries.

'A lovely night!' said the lady in a tender, happy voice, just as I passed them.

'Ohe!' lazily muttered the Englishman, for whom life was so comfortable that he did not even feel like talking. To all of them life in this world was so comfortable, convenient, clean, and easy; their movements and faces expressed such indifference to any other kind of life than their own, such assurance that the porter would step aside for them and bow, and that on returning they would find comfortable rooms and beds, that it all must be so and that they had a right to it all, that I involuntarily contrasted them with the vagrant singer who, tired and perhaps hungry, was escaping ashamed from the laughing crowd, and I realized what it was that weighed on my heart like a stone, and I felt indescribable anger against these people. Twice I walked to and fro past the Englishman, and each time with inexpressible pleasure avoided making way for him and pushed him with my elbow; then darting down the steps I hastened through the darkness in the direction of the town, where the little man had disappeared.

Having overtaken three men who were walking together, I asked them where the singer was. They laughed and pointed straight ahead. He was

walking quickly, by himself. No one went near him, and he seemed to me to be angrily muttering something to himself. I caught him up and proposed to him to go somewhere and drink a bottle of wine. He went on walking just as fast and looked disconsolately at me, but when he had made out what I wanted, he stopped.

'Well, I won't refuse it, if you are so kind,' he said. 'There is a small café here, we could go in there. It's a plain place,' he added, pointing to a drink shop which was still open.

The word 'plain' involuntarily suggested to me the idea of not going to the plain café but to the Schweizerhof, where the people were who had listened to him. Though in timid agitation he several times declined to go to the Schweizerhof, saying that it was too fine there, I insisted on it and he walked back along the quay with me pretending not to be at all abashed, and gaily swinging his guitar. Several idle strollers drew near as soon as I went up to the singer and listened to what I was saying: and now, after arguing among themselves, they followed us to the hotel entrance, probably expecting some further performance from the Tyrolese.

I met a waiter in the vestibule and asked him for a bottle of wine, but he merely looked at us with a smile and ran past. The head waiter, to whom I addressed the same request, listened to me seriously, and having scanned the tiny figure of the timid singer from head to foot, sternly told the porter to take us to the room on the left. This room was a bar for common people, the whole furniture consisted of bare wooden tables and benches, and a hunch-backed woman was washing up dishes in a corner. The waiter who came to take our order looked at us with a mildly supercilious smile and, thrusting his

hands in his pockets, exchanged remarks with the hunchbacked dish-washer. He evidently wished to let us know that, feeling himself immeasurably superior to the singer in social standing as well as on his own merits, he was not at all offended, but even quite amused, to be waiting on us.

'Will you have *vin ordinaire*?' he asked with a knowing look, winking towards my companion and shifting his napkin from one arm to the other.

'Champagne, and your very best!' said I, trying to assume a haughty and imposing air. But neither the champagne nor my endeavour to look haughty and imposing had any effect on the waiter: he grinned, stood awhile gazing at us, looked deliberately at his gold watch, and went leisurely and with soft steps out of the room as if he were out for a stroll. He soon returned with the wine and with two other waiters. The two waiters sat down near the dish-washer and gazed at us with the amused attention and bland smiles with which parents watch their dear children when they play nicely. Only the hunchbacked dish-washer seemed to look at us with sympathy rather than irony. Though I felt it very uncomfortable and awkward to talk with the singer and entertain him under the fire of those eyes, I tried to do my part with as little constraint as possible. In the lighted room I could see him better. He was a tiny, well-proportioned, wiry man, almost a midget, with bristly black hair, large tearful black eyes without lashes, and a thoroughly pleasant and attractively shaped little mouth. He had short side-whiskers, rather short hair, and his clothes were simple and poor. He was dingy, tattered, sunburnt, and had in general the look of a labourer. He was more like a poor pedlar than an artist. Only in his humid, shining eyes and

puckering mouth was there something original and touching. Judging by his appearance he might have been anything from twenty-five to forty years old; he was really thirty-eight.

This is what he told me, with good-natured readiness and evident sincerity, about his life. He was from Aargau. While still a child he had lost his father and mother and had no other relations. He had never had any means of his own. He had been apprenticed to a joiner, but twenty-two years ago a bone of his finger had begun to decay, which made it impossible for him to work. He had been fond of music from his childhood, and began to go round singing. Foreigners occasionally gave him money. He made a profession of it, bought a guitar, and for eighteen years had wandered through Switzerland and Italy singing in front of hotels. His whole belongings were the guitar and a purse, in which he now had only a franc and a half, which he would have to spend that night on food and lodging. He had gone every year to all the best and most frequented places in Switzerland: Zurich, Lucerne, Interlaken, Chamonix, and so on; and was now going round for the eighteenth time. He passed over the St. Bernard into Italy and returned by St. Gotthard or through Savoy. It was getting hard for him to walk now, because a pain in his feet which he called *Gliederzucht* (rheumatism) got worse every year when he caught cold, and his eyes and his voice were growing weaker. In spite of this he was now on his way to Interlaken, Aix-les-Bains, and over the little St. Bernard to Italy, of which country he was particularly fond; in general he seemed to be very well satisfied with his life. When I asked him why he was going home and whether he had any relations there, or a house and land, his mouth puckered into a merry smile and he replied:

'*Oui, le sucre est bon, il est doux pour les enfants!*'<sup>1</sup> and winked at the waiters.

I did not understand what he meant, but the group of waiters burst out laughing:

'I've got nothing, or would I be going about like this?' he explained. 'I go home because, after all, something draws me back to my native land.'

And he again repeated, with a sly self-satisfied smile, the phrase: '*Oui, le sucre est bon!*' and laughed good-naturedly. The waiters were very pleased and laughed heartily. Only the hunchbacked dishwasher looked at the little man seriously with her large kindly eyes and picked up the cap he had dropped from the bench during our conversation. I had noticed that wandering singers, acrobats, and even jugglers, like to call themselves artists, and so I hinted several times to my companion that he was an artist; but he did not at all acknowledge that quality in himself, and considered his occupation simply as a means of subsistence. When I asked him whether he did not himself compose the songs he sang, he was surprised at so strange a question, and answered: 'How could I? They are all old Tyrolese songs.'

'But what about the Rigi song—that is not old, is it?' I said.

'No, that was composed about fifteen years ago,' he said. 'There was a German in Basle, a very clever man. He composed it. It's a splendid song! You see, he composed it for the tourists.'

And, translating them into French as he went along, he began repeating to me the words of the Rigi song, which he liked so much:

'If you would go up the Rigi  
You need no shoes as far as Weggis  
(Because you go that far by steamer)

'Yes, sugar is good: it is sweet for children.'



But in Weggis take a big stick,  
And upon your arm a maiden.  
Drink a glass of wine at starting,  
Only do not drink too much.  
For he who wants to have a drink  
Should first have earned . . .

'Oh, it's a splendid song!' he said, as he finished.

The waiters, too, probably considered the song very good, for they came nearer to us.

'Yes, but who composed the music?' I asked.

'Oh, nobody! It comes of itself, you know—one must have something new to sing to the foreigners.'

When the ice was brought and I had poured out a glass of champagne for my companion, he seemed to feel ill at ease, and glancing round at the waiters shifted uneasily in his seat. We clinked glasses to the health of artists; he drank half a glass, and then found it necessary to raise his eyebrows in profound thought.

'It's a long time since I drank such wine, *je ne vous dis que ça*.' In Italy the d'Asti wine is good, but this is better still. Ah, Italy! It's splendid to be there!' he added.

'Yes, there they know how to appreciate music and artists,' I said, wishing to lead him back to the subject of his failure that evening before the Schweizerhof.

'No,' he replied. 'There, as far as music is concerned, I cannot give anyone pleasure. The Italians are themselves musicians like none others in the world: I sing only Tyrolese songs—that at any rate is a novelty for them.'

'And are the gentlefolk more generous there?' I went on, wishing to make him share my resentment against the guests at the Schweizerhof. 'It couldn't happen there, could it, as it did here, that in an

1 'I only say that to you.'

immense hotel frequented by rich people, out of a hundred who listen to an artist not one gives him anything?"

My question had quite a different effect on him from what I had expected. It did not enter his head to be indignant with them: on the contrary he detected in my remark a reflection on his talent, which had failed to elicit any reward, and he tried to justify himself to me.

'One does not get much every time,' he replied. 'Sometimes my voice fails or I am tired. To-day, you know, I have been walking for nine hours and singing almost all the time. That is hard. And the great people, the aristocrats, don't always care to hear Tyrolese songs.'

'But still, how could they give nothing at all?' I insisted.

He did not understand my remark.

'It's not that,' he said, 'the chief thing here is, *on est très serré pour la police*,<sup>1</sup> that's where the trouble is. Here under their republican laws you are not allowed to sing, but in Italy you may go about as much as you please, and no one will say a word to you. Here they allow it only when they please, and if they don't please, they may put you in prison.'

'How is that? Is it possible?'

'Yes, if they caution you once and you sing again they may imprison you. I was there for three months,' he said smiling, as though this were one of his pleasantest recollections.

'Oh, that's dreadful!' I said. 'What for?'

'That is so under the new republican laws,' he continued, growing animated. 'They don't want to understand that a poor fellow must live somehow. If I were not a cripple, I would work. But does my singing hurt anyone? What does it mean? The

<sup>1</sup> 'One is much cramped by the police.'

rich can live as they please, but *un pauvre tiable* like myself mayn't even live. Are these the laws a republic should have? If so, we don't want a republic—isn't that so, dear sir? We don't want a republic, but we want—we simply want . . . we want'—he hesitated awhile—'we want natural laws.'

I filled up his glass.

'You are not drinking,' I said to him.

He took the glass in his hand and bowed to me.

'I know what you want,' he said, screwing up his eyes and shaking his finger at me. 'You want to make me drunk, so as to see what will happen to me; but no, you won't succeed!'

'Why should I want to make you drunk?' I said. 'I only want to give you pleasure.'

Probably he was sorry to have offended me by interpreting my intention wrongly, for he grew confused, got up, and pressed my elbow.

'No, no, I was only joking!' he said, looking at me with a beseeching expression in his moist eyes.

Then he uttered some fearfully intricate, complicated sentence intended to imply that I was a good fellow after all.

'*Je ne vous dis que ça!*' he concluded.

So we continued drinking and talking and the waiters continued to watch us unceremoniously and, as it seemed, to make fun of us. Despite my interest in our conversation I could not help noticing them and, I confess, I grew more and more angry. One of them got up, came over to the little man, looked down on the crown of his head, and began to smile. I had accumulated a store of anger for the guests at the Schweizerhof which I had not yet been able to vent on anyone, and I own that this audience of waiters irritated me beyond endurance. Then the porter came in and, leaning his elbows on the table without taking off his hat, sat down beside me.

This last circumstance stung my self-esteem or vanity, and finally caused the oppressive rage that had been smouldering in me all the evening to explode. 'Why when I was alone at the entrance did he humbly bow to me, and now that I am sitting with an itinerant singer, sprawls near me so rudely?' I was filled with a boiling rage of indignation which I like in myself and even stimulate when it besets me, because it has a tranquillizing effect, and gives, at least for a short time, an unusual suppleness, energy, and power to all my physical and mental faculties.

I jumped up.

'What are you laughing at?' I shouted at the waiter, feeling that I was growing pale and that my lips were involuntarily twitching.

'I am not laughing; it's nothing!' said the waiter stepping back.

'No, you are laughing at this gentleman. . . . And what right have you to be here and to be sitting down, when there are visitors here? Don't dare to sit here!' I cried turning to the porter.

He got up with a growl and moved towards the door.

'What right have you to laugh at this gentleman and to sit near him, when he is a visitor and you are a lackey? Why didn't you laugh at me or sit beside me at dinner this evening? Is it because he is poorly dressed and sings in the street? Is it? While I wear good clothes? He is poor, but I am convinced that he is a thousand times better than you, for he insults no one, while you are insulting him!'

'But I am not doing anything!' replied my enemy the waiter, timidly. 'Do I prevent his sitting here?'

The waiter did not understand me and my

German speech was lost on him. The rude porter tried to take the waiter's part, but I attacked him so vehemently that he pretended that he, too, did not understand me, and waved his arm. The hunch-backed dish-washer, either noticing my heated condition and afraid of a scandal, or because she really shared my views, took my part and, trying to interpose between me and the porter, began to persuade him to be quiet, saying that I was right and asking me to calm myself. '*Der Herr hat recht; Sie haben recht!*'<sup>1</sup> she said firmly. The singer presented a most piteous, frightened appearance and, evidently without understanding why I was excited or what I was aiming at, begged me to go away quickly. But my angry loquacity burned stronger and stronger in me. I recalled everything: the crowd that had laughed at him, and the audience that had given him nothing—and I would not quiet down on any account. I think that if the waiters and the porter had not been so yielding I should have enjoyed a fight with them, or could have whacked the defenceless young English lady on the head with a stick. Had I been at Sevastopol at that moment I would gladly have rushed into an English trench to have fought and slash at them.

'And why did you show me and this gentleman into this room, and not the other, eh?' I asked the porter, seizing his arm to prevent his going away. 'What right had you to decide from his appearance that this gentleman must be in this and not in the other room? Are not all who pay on an equal footing in an hotel—not only in a republic, but all over the world? Yours is a scurvy republic! . . . This is your equality! You dare not show those English people into this room—the very Englishmen who listened to this gentleman without paying him—

<sup>1</sup> 'The gentleman is right; you are right.'

What is, who each stole from him the few centimes they ought to have given him. How dared you show us in here?"

"The other room is closed," replied the porter.

"No!" I cried. "That's not true—it's not closed."

"You know better then."

"I know! I know that you are lying."

The porter turned his shoulder towards me.

"What is the use of talking?" he muttered.

"No, not 'what is the use . . .'" I shouted. "Take us to the other room at once!"

Despite the hunchbacked woman's and the singer's entreaties that we should go away, I had the head waiter called and went into the other room with my companion. When the head waiter heard my angry voice and saw my excited face he did not argue with me, but told me with contemptuous civility that I might go where I liked. I could not convict the porter of his lie, as he had disappeared before I went into the other room.

The room was really open and lighted up, and at one of the tables the Englishman with the lady was enjoying supper. Though we were shown to another room, I sat down with the dirty singer close to the Englishman, and ordered the unfinished bottle to be brought me.

The Englishman and the lady looked first with surprise and then with anger at the little man who sat beside me more dead than alive. They exchanged some words, and the lady pushed away her plate, and rustled her silk dress as they went away. Through the panes in the door I could see the Englishman speaking angrily to the waiter, pointing in our direction all the time. The waiter thrust his head in at the door and looked towards us. I waited with pleasure for them to come to turn us out, and to be able at last to vent my whole

indignation on them—but fortunately, though I then regretted it, they left us in peace.

The singer, who had before refused the wine, now hastened to empty the bottle in order to get away as soon as possible. However, he thanked me, feelingly I thought, for his entertainment. His moist eyes became still more tearful and shining, and he expressed his gratitude in a most curious and confused little speech. But that speech, in which he said that if everyone respected artists as I did he would be well off, and that he wished me all happiness, was very pleasant to me. We went out into the vestibule. The waiters were there and my enemy the porter who seemed to be complaining of me to them. They all looked on me, I think, as insane. I let the little man come up to them all, and then, with all the respect I could show, I took off my hat and pressed his hand with its ossified and withered finger. The waiters made a show of not taking any notice of me, but one of them burst into a sardonic laugh.

After bowing to me, the singer disappeared into the darkness, and I went up to my room, wishing to sleep off all these impressions and the foolish childish anger which had so unexpectedly beset me. Feeling too agitated however for sleep, I went out again into the street to walk about till I should have calmed down, and also I must admit with a vague hope of finding an opportunity to come across the porter, the waiter, or the Englishman, to prove to them how cruel and above all how unjust they had been. But I met no one except the porter, who turned his back on seeing me, and I paced up and down the embankment all alone.

‘This is the strange fate of art!’ I reflected, having grown a little calmer. ‘All seek it and love it—it is the one thing everybody wants and tries to

and in life, yet nobody acknowledges its power, nobody values this greatest blessing in the world, nor esteems or is grateful to those who give it to mankind. Ask anyone you like of all these guests at the Schweizerhof what is the greatest blessing in the world, and everyone, or ninety-nine out of a hundred, assuming a sardonic expression, will say that the best thing in the world is money! "Maybe this idea does not please you and does not conform to your lofty ideas," he will tell you, "but what is to be done if human life is so constituted that money alone gives people happiness? I cannot help letting my reason see the world as it is," he will add, "that is—see the truth."

"Pitiful is your reason, pitiful the happiness you desire, and you are a miserable being who does not know what you want. . . . Why have you all left your country, your relations, your occupations, and your financial affairs, and congregated here in this small Swiss town of Lucerne? Why did you all come out onto the balcony this evening and listen in respectful silence to the songs of that poor little mendicant? And had he chosen to go on singing you would still have remained silent and listened. What money, even millions of it, could have driven you all from your country and assembled you in this little corner, Lucerne? Could money have gathered you all on those balconies and made you stand for half an hour silent and motionless? No! One thing alone causes you to act, and will always influence you more strongly than any other motive power in life, and that is the need for art, which you do not acknowledge, but which you feel and will always feel as long as there is anything human left in you. The word "art" seems ridiculous to you. You use it as a scornful reproach; you perhaps allow love of the poetic in children and in silly girls, but even



then you laugh at them; but for yourselves you require something positive. But children see life healthily, they love and know what men should love, and what gives happiness, but life has so enmeshed and depraved you that you laugh at the one thing you love, and seek only that which you hate and which causes you unhappiness. You are so enmeshed that you do not understand your obligation to this poor Tyrolese who has afforded you a pure enjoyment, yet you feel yourselves bound to humble yourselves gratuitously before a lord, without advantage or pleasure, and for some reason sacrifice for him your comfort and convenience. What nonsense! What incomprehensible senselessness! But it was not this that struck me most this evening. This ignorance of what gives happiness, this unconsciousness of poetic enjoyment, I almost understand, or have become used to, having often met it in my life; nor was the coarse, unconscious cruelty of the crowd new to me. Whatever the advocates of the popular spirit may say, a crowd is a combination possibly of good people, but of people who have come in touch merely on their base, animal sides, and it expresses only the weakness and cruelty of human nature. How could you, children of a free, humane nation, as Christians or simply as human beings, respond with coldness and ridicule to the pleasure afforded you by an unfortunate mendicant? But no, in your country there are institutions for the needy. There are no beggars and must be none, nor must there be any compassion, on which mendicancy is based. But this man had laboured, he gave you pleasure, he implored you to give him something from your superabundance for his pains, of which you availed yourselves. But you, from your lofty, brilliant palace, regarded him with a cold smile and there

was not one among you hundred, happy, rich people who threw him anything. He went away humiliated, and the senseless crowd followed him laughing, and insulted not you but him, because you were cold, cruel, and dishonest; because you stole the pleasure he had afforded you, they insulted him.'

*'On the seventh of July 1857, in Lucerne, in front of the Hotel Schweizerhof in which the richest people stay, an itinerant beggar singer sang and played the guitar for half an hour. About a hundred people listened to him. The singer asked them all three times to give him something. Not one of them gave him anything, and many people laughed at him.'*

This is not fiction, but a positive fact, which can be verified by anyone who likes from the permanent residents at the Hotel Schweizerhof, after ascertaining from the papers who the foreigners were who were staying at the Schweizerhof on the 7th of July.

Here is an occurrence the historians of our time ought to record in indelible letters of fire. This incident is more significant, more serious, and has a profounder meaning, than the facts usually printed in newspapers and histories. That the English have killed another thousand Chinamen because the Chinese buy nothing for money while their country absorbs metal coins, that the French have killed another thousand Arabs because corn grows easily in Africa and constant warfare is useful for training armies; that the Turkish Ambassador in Naples must not be a Jew, and that the Emperor Napoleon walks on foot at Plombières and assures the people in print that he reigns only by the will of the whole nation—all these are words that conceal or reveal what has long been known; but what happened at Lucerne on July the 7th appears to me

to be something quite new and strange, and relates not to the eternally evil side of human nature, but to a certain epoch in social evolution. This is a fact not for the history of human actions, but for the history of progress and civilization.

Why is this inhuman occurrence, which would be impossible in any German, French, or Italian village, possible here where civilization, liberty, and equality have been brought to the highest point, and where the most civilized travellers from the most civilized nations congregate? Why have these developed, humane people, who collectively are capable of any honourable and humane action, no human, cordial inclination to perform a kindly personal action? Why do these people—who in their parliaments, meetings, and societies are warmly concerned about the condition of the celibate Chinese in India, about propagating Christianity and education in Africa, about the establishment of societies for the betterment of the whole human race—not find in their souls the simple elemental feeling of human sympathy? Is it possible that they do not possess that feeling, and that its place has been occupied by the vanity, ambition, and cupidity governing these men in their parliaments, meetings, and societies? Can it be that the spread of the sensible and selfish association of men called civilization, destroys and contradicts the need for instinctive, loving association? And is it possible that this is the equality for which so much innocent blood has been shed and so many crimes committed? Is it possible that nations, like children, can be made happy by the mere sound of the word equality?

‘Equality before the law?’ But does the whole life of man take place in the sphere of law? Only a thousandth part of it depends on law, the rest takes place outside, in the sphere of social customs and

conceptions. In this society the waiter is better dressed than the singer and insults him with impunity. I am better dressed than the waiter and insult him with impunity. The porter regards me as superior, and the singer as inferior, to himself; when I joined the singer he considered himself our equal and became rude. I grew insolent to the porter and he felt himself inferior to me. The waiter was insolent to the singer and the latter felt himself inferior to him. Can this be a free country—'positively free' as people say—in which there is a single citizen who, without having caused harm to anyone, is put in prison for doing the only thing he can do to save himself from starvation?

What an unfortunate, pitiful creature is man, with his desire for positive decisions, thrown into this ever moving, limitless ocean of good and evil, of facts, conceptions, and contradictions! For ages men have struggled and laboured to place good on one side and evil on the other. Centuries pass, and whenever an impartial mind places good and evil on the scales, the balance remains even, and the proportion of good and evil remains unaltered. If only man would learn not to judge, not to think sharply and positively, and not to answer questions presented to him only because they are for ever unanswerable! If only he understood that every thought is both false and true! False by one-sidedness resulting from man's inability to embrace the whole of truth, and true as an expression of one fact of human endeavour.

Men have made subdivisions for themselves in this eternally moving, unending, intermingled chaos of good and evil; they have traced imaginary lines on that ocean, and expect the ocean to divide itself accordingly, as if there were not millions of other subdivisions made from quite other points of view

on another plane. It is true that fresh subdivisions are worked out from century to century, but millions of centuries have passed and millions more will pass. 'Civilization is good, barbarianism is bad. Freedom is good, subjection is bad.' This imaginary knowledge destroys the instinctive, beatific, primitive demand for kindliness in human nature. And who will define for me what is freedom, what is despotism, what is civilization, and what barbarianism? Where does the boundary lie between the one and the other? Whose soul possesses so absolute a standard of good and evil that he can measure all the confused and fleeting facts? Whose mind is so great that it can comprehend and measure even the facts of the stationary past? And who has seen a condition in which good and evil did not exist together? And how do I know that it is not my point of view which decides whether I see more of the one than of the other? Who is capable, even for a moment, of severing himself so completely from life as to look down on it with complete detachment? We have one unerring guide, and only one—the universal Spirit which inspiring each and all of us, implants in every individual a craving for what ought to be; that same Spirit which causes the tree to grow towards the sun, the flower to shed its seeds in the autumn, and bids us instinctively draw closer together.

And it is that one blissful and impeccable voice that the noisy, hasty development of civilization stifles. Who is more a man and less a barbarian: that lord who, seeing the threadbare clothes of the singer, angrily left the table, and for his efforts did not give him a millionth part of his wealth, and who now sits, well fed, in a bright comfortable room, calmly discussing the affairs in China and finding the massacres committed there quite

justified—or the little singer, who risking imprisonment and with a franc in his pocket has for twenty years been going over mountains and valleys doing no one any harm, but bringing consolation to them by his singing, and who was to-day insulted and almost driven out and, tired, hungry, and humiliated, has gone to sleep somewhere on rotting straw?

At that moment, in the dead stillness of the night, I heard somewhere in the far distance the little man's guitar and voice.

'No,' I said to myself involuntarily, 'you have no right to pity him and to be indignant at the lord's well-being. Who has weighed the inner happiness to be found in the soul of each of them? He is now sitting somewhere on a dirty door-step, gazing at the gleaming moonlit sky and gaily singing in the calm of the fragrant night; in his heart there is no reproach, or malice, or regret. And who knows what is now going on in the souls of all the people within these palatial walls? Who can tell whether among them all there is as much carefree benign joy in life and harmony with the world as lives in the soul of that little man? Endless is the mercy and wisdom of Him who has allowed and ordained that all these contradictions should exist. Only to you, insignificant worm, who rashly and wrongly try to penetrate His laws and His intentions—only to you do they seem contradictions. He looks down benignly from His bright immeasurable height and rejoices in the infinite harmony into which all your endless contradictory movements resolve themselves.

'In your pride you thought you could separate yourself from the universal law. But you, too, with your mean and petty indignation at the waiters, have been playing your necessary part in the eternal and infinite harmony.'



**ALBERT**





# ALBERT

## A TALE

### I

FIVE wealthy young men had come, after two in the morning, to amuse themselves at a small Petersburg party.

Much champagne had been drunk, most of the men were very young, the girls were pretty, the piano and violin indefatigably played one polka after another, and dancing and noise went on unceasingly: yet for some reason it was dull and awkward, and, as often happens, everybody felt that it was all unnecessary and was not the thing.

Several times they tried to get things going, but forced merriment was worse even than boredom.

One of the five young men, more dissatisfied than the others with himself, with the others, and with the whole evening, rose with a feeling of disgust, found his hat, and went out quietly, intending to go home.

There was no one in the ante-room, but in the adjoining room he heard two voices disputing. The young man stopped to listen.

'You can't, there are guests there,' said a woman's voice.

'Let me in, please. I'm all right!' a man's weak voice entreated.

'No, I won't let you in without Madame's permission,' said the woman. 'Where are you going? Ah! What a man you are!'

The door burst open and a strange figure of a man appeared on the threshold. The servant on seeing a visitor no longer protested, and the strange figure, bowing timidly, entered the room, swaying

on his bent legs. He was of medium height, with a narrow, stooping back, and long tangled hair. He wore a short overcoat, and narrow torn trousers over a pair of rough uncleaned boots. A necktie, twisted into a cord, was fastened round his long white neck. A dirty shirt showed from under his coat and hung over his thin hands. Yet despite the extreme emaciation of his body, his face was white and delicate, and freshness and colour played on his cheeks above his scanty black beard and whiskers. His unkempt hair, thrown back, revealed a rather low and extremely clear forehead. His dark languid eyes looked softly, imploringly, and yet with dignity, before him. Their expression corresponded alluringly with that of the fresh lips, curved at the corners, which showed from under his thin moustache.

Having advanced a few steps he stopped, turned to the young man, and smiled. He seemed to smile with difficulty, but when the smile lit up his face the young man—without knowing why—smiled too.

‘Who is that?’ he whispered to the servant, when the strange figure had passed into the room from which came the sounds of a dance.

‘A crazy musician from the theatre,’ replied the maid. ‘He comes sometimes to see the mistress.’

‘Where have you been, Delésov?’ someone just then called out, and the young man, who was named Delésov, returned to the ball-room.

The musician was standing at the door and, looking at the dancers, showed by his smile, his look, and the tapping of his foot, the satisfaction the spectacle afforded him.

‘Come in and dance yourself,’ said one of the visitors to him.

The musician bowed and looked inquiringly at the hostess.

'Go, go . . . Why not, when the gentlemen ask you to?' she said.

The thin, weak limbs of the musician suddenly came into active motion, and winking, smiling, and twitching, he began to prance awkwardly and heavily about the room. In the middle of the quadrille a merry officer, who danced very vivaciously and well, accidentally bumped into the musician with his back. The latter's weak and weary legs did not maintain their balance and after a few stumbling steps aside, he fell full length on the floor. Notwithstanding the dull thud produced by his fall, at first nearly everyone burst out laughing.

But the musician did not get up. The visitors grew silent and even the piano ceased. Delésov and the hostess were the first to run up to the fallen man. He was lying on his elbow, staring with dull eyes at the floor. When they lifted him and seated him on a chair, he brushed the hair back from his forehead with a quick movement of his bony hand and began to smile without answering their questions.

'Mr. Albert! Mr. Albert!' said the hostess. 'Have you hurt yourself? Where? There now, I said you ought not to dance. He is so weak,' she continued, addressing her guests, '—he can hardly walk. How could he dance?'

'Who is he?' they asked her.

'A poor man—an artist. A very good fellow, but pitiable, as you see.'

She said this unembarrassed by the presence of the musician. He suddenly came to himself and, as if afraid of something, shrank into a heap and pushed those around him away.

'It's all nothing!' he suddenly said, rising from his chair with an obvious effort.

And to show that he was not at all hurt he went

into the middle of the room and tried to jump about, but staggered and would have fallen down again had someone not supported him.

Everyone felt awkward, and looking at him they all became silent.

The musician's eyes again grew dim, and evidently oblivious of everyone he began rubbing his knee with his hand. Suddenly he raised his head, advanced a trembling leg, threw back his hair with the same heedless movement as before, and going up to the violinist took his violin from him.

'It's nothing!' he said once more, flourishing the violin. 'Gentlemen, let's have some music!'

'What a strange person!' the visitors remarked to one another.

'Perhaps a fine talent is perishing in this unfortunate creature,' said one of the guests.

'Yes, he's pitiable, pitiable!' said a third.

'What a beautiful face! . . . There is something extraordinary about him,' said Delésov. 'Let us see . . .'

## II

ALBERT meanwhile, paying no attention to anyone, pressed the violin to his shoulder and paced slowly up and down by the piano tuning it. His lips took on an impassive expression, his eyes could not be seen, but his narrow bony back, his long white neck, his crooked legs and shaggy black head, presented a queer—but for some reason not at all ridiculous—spectacle. Having tuned the violin he briskly struck a chord, and throwing back his head turned to the pianist who was preparing to accompany him.

'*Mélancolie G-dur!*' he said, addressing the pianist with a gesture of command.

Then, as if begging forgiveness for that gesture,

he smiled meekly, and glanced round at the audience with that same smile. Having pushed back his hair with the hand in which he held the bow, he stopped at the corner of the piano, and with a smooth and easy movement drew the bow across the strings. A clear melodious sound was borne through the room and complete silence ensued.

After that first note the theme flowed freely and elegantly, suddenly illumining the inner world of every listener with an unexpectedly clear and tranquillizing light. Not one false or exaggerated sound impaired the acquiescence of the listeners: the notes were all clear, elegant, and significant. Everyone silently followed their development with tremulous expectation. From the state of dullness, noisy distraction and mental torpor in which they had been, these people were suddenly and imperceptibly carried into another quite different world that they had forgotten. Now a calm contemplation of the past arose in their souls, now an impassioned memory of some past happiness, now a boundless desire for power and splendour, now a feeling of resignation, of unsatisfied love and sadness. Sounds now tenderly sad, now vehemently despairing, mingled freely, flowing and flowing one after the other so elegantly, so strongly, and so unconsciously, that the sounds themselves were not noticed, but there flowed of itself into the soul a beautiful torrent of poetry, long familiar but only now expressed. At each note Albert grew taller and taller. He was far from appearing misshapen or strange. Pressing the violin with his chin and listening to his notes with an expression of passionate attention, he convulsively moved his feet. Now he straightened himself to his full height, now he strenuously bent his back. His left arm seemed to have become set in the bent position to which he

had strained it and only the bony fingers moved convulsively: the right arm moved smoothly, elegantly, and almost imperceptibly. His face shone with uninterrupted, ecstatic joy; his eyes burnt with a bright, dry brilliance, his nostrils expanded, his red lips opened with delight.

Sometimes his head bent closer to the violin, his eyes closed, and his face, half covered by his hair, lit up with a smile of mild rapture. Sometimes he drew himself up rapidly, advancing one foot, and his clear brow and the beaming look he cast round the room gleamed with pride, dignity, and a consciousness of power. Once the pianist blundered and struck a wrong chord. Physical suffering was apparent in the whole face and figure of the musician. He paused for an instant and stamping his foot with an expression of childish anger, cried: '*Moll, ce moll!*' The pianist recovered himself. Albert closed his eyes, smiled, and again forgetting himself, the others, and the whole world, gave himself up rapturously to his task.

All who were in the room preserved a submissive silence while Albert was playing, and seemed to live and breathe only in his music.

The merry officer sat motionless on a chair by a window, directing a lifeless gaze upon the floor and breathing slowly and heavily. The girls sat in complete silence along the walls, and only occasionally threw approving and bewildered glances at one another. The hostess's fat smiling face expanded with pleasure. The pianist riveted his eyes on Albert's face and, with a fear of blundering which expressed itself in his whole taut figure, tried to keep up with him. One of the visitors who had drunk more than the others lay prone on the sofa, trying not to move for fear of betraying his agitation. Delésov experienced an unaccustomed sensation.

It was as if a cold circle, now expanding, now contracting, held his head in a vice. The roots of his hair became sensitive, cold shivers ran up his spine, something rising higher and higher in his throat prickled his nose and palate as if with fine needles, and tears involuntarily wetted his cheeks. He shook himself, tried to restrain them and wipe them unperceived, but others rose and ran down his cheeks. By some strange concatenation of impressions the first sounds of Albert's violin carried Delésov back to his early youth. Now no longer very young, tired of life and exhausted, he suddenly felt himself a self-satisfied, good-looking, blissfully foolish and unconsciously happy lad of seventeen. He remembered his first love—for his cousin in a little pink dress; remembered his first declaration of love made in a linden avenue; remembered the warmth and incomprehensible delight of a spontaneous kiss, and the magic and undivined mystery of the Nature that then surrounded him. In the memories that returned to him *she* shone out amid a mist of vague hopes, uncomprehended desires, and questioning faith in the possibility of impossible happiness. All the unappreciated moments of that time arose before him one after another, not as insignificant moments of a fleeting present, but as arrested, growing, reproachful images of the past. He contemplated them with joy, and wept—wept not because the time was past that he might have spent better (if he had it again he would not have undertaken to employ it better), but merely because it was past and would never return. Memories rose up of themselves, and Albert's violin repeated again and again: 'For you that time of vigour, love, and happiness has passed for ever, and will not return. Weep for it, shed all your tears, die weeping for that time—that is the best happiness left for you.'



Towards the end of the last variation Albert's face grew red, his eyes burnt and glowed, and large drops of perspiration ran down his cheeks. The veins of his forehead swelled up, his whole body came more and more into motion, his pale lips no longer closed, and his whole figure expressed ecstatic eagerness for enjoyment.

Passionately swaying his whole body and tossing back his hair he lowered the violin, and with a smile of proud dignity and happiness surveyed the audience. Then his back sagged, his head hung down, his lips closed, his eyes grew dim, and he timidly glanced round as if ashamed of himself, and made his way stumblingly into the other room.

### III

SOMETHING strange occurred with everyone present and something strange was felt in the dead silence that followed Albert's playing. It was as if each would have liked to express what all this meant, but was unable to do so. What did it mean—this bright hot room, brilliant women, the dawn in the windows, excitement in the blood, and the pure impression left by sounds that had flowed past? But no one even tried to say what it all meant: on the contrary everyone, unable to dwell in those regions which the new impression had revealed to them, rebelled against it.

'He really plays well, you know!' said the officer.

'Wonderfully!' replied Delésov, stealthily wiping his cheek with his sleeve.

'However, it's time for us to be going,' said the man who was lying on the sofa, having somewhat recovered. 'We must give him something. Let's make a collection.'

Meanwhile Albert sat alone on a sofa in the next

room. Leaning his elbows on his bony knees he stroked his face and ruffled his hair with his moist and dirty hands, smiling happily to himself.

They made a good collection, which Delésov offered to hand to Albert.

Moreover it had occurred to Delésov, on whom the music had made an unusual and powerful impression, to be of use to this man. It occurred to him to take him home, dress him, get him a place somewhere, and in general rescue him from his sordid condition.

'Well, are you tired?' he asked, coming up to him. Albert smiled.

'You have real talent. You ought to study music seriously and give public performances.'

'I'd like to have something to drink,' said Albert, as if just awake.

Delésov brought some wine, and the musician eagerly drank two glasses.

'What excellent wine!' he said.

'What a delightful thing that *Mélancolie* is!' said Delésov.

'Oh, yes, yes!' replied Albert with a smile---'but excuse me: I don't know with whom I have the honour of speaking, maybe you are a count, or a prince: could you, perhaps, lend me a little money?' He paused a little. 'I have nothing . . . I am a poor man. I couldn't pay it back.'

Delésov flushed: he felt awkward, and hastily handed the musician the money that had been collected.

'Thank you very much!' said Albert, seizing the money. 'Now let's have some music. I'll play for you as much as you like---only let me have a drink of something, a drink . . .' he added, rising.

Delésov brought him some more wine and asked him to sit beside him.

'Excuse me if I am frank with you,' he said, 'your talent interests me so much. It seems to me you are not in good circumstances.'

Albert looked now at Delésov and now at his hostess who had entered the room.

'Allow me to offer you my services,' continued Delésov. 'If you are in need of anything I should be glad if you would stay with me for a time. I am living alone and could perhaps be of use to you.'

Albert smiled and made no reply.

'Why don't you thank him?' said the hostess. 'Of course it is a godsend for you. Only I should not advise you to,' she continued, turning to Delésov and shaking her head disapprovingly.

'I am very grateful to you!' said Albert, pressing Delésov's hand with his own moist ones—'Only let us have some music now, please.'

But the other visitors were preparing to leave, and despite Albert's endeavours to persuade them to stay they went out into the hall.

Albert took leave of the hostess, put on his shabby broad-brimmed hat and old summer cloak, which was his only winter clothing, and went out into the porch with Delésov.

When Delésov had seated himself with his new acquaintance in his carriage, and became aware of the unpleasant odour of drunkenness and uncleanness which emanated so strongly from the musician, he began to repent of his action and blamed himself for childish soft-heartedness and imprudence. Besides, everything Albert said was so stupid and trivial, and the fresh air suddenly made him so disgustingly drunk that Delésov was repelled. 'What am I to do with him?' he thought.

When they had driven for a quarter of an hour Albert grew silent, his hat fell down at his feet, and he himself tumbled into a corner of the carriage

and began to snore. The wheels continued to creak monotonously over the frozen snow; the feeble light of dawn hardly penetrated the frozen windows.

Delésov turned and looked at his companion. The long body covered by the cloak lay lifelessly beside him. The long head with its big black nose seemed to sway on that body, but looking closer Delésov saw that what he had taken for nose and face was hair, and that the real face hung lower. He stooped and was able to distinguish Albert's features. Then the beauty of the forehead and calmly closed lips struck him again.

Under the influence of tired nerves, restlessness from lack of sleep at that hour of the morning, and of the music he had heard, Delésov, looking at that face, let himself again be carried back to the blissful world into which he had glanced that night; he again recalled the happy and magnanimous days of his youth and no longer repented of what he had done. At that moment he was sincerely and warmly attached to Albert, and firmly resolved to be of use to him.

#### IV

NEXT morning when he was awakened to go to his office, Delésov with a feeling of unpleasant surprise saw around him his old screen, his old valet, and his watch lying on the small side-table. 'But what did I expect to see if not what is always around me?' he asked himself. Then he remembered the musician's black eyes and happy smile, the motif of *Mélancolie*, and all the strange experiences of the previous night passed through his mind.

He had no time however to consider whether he had acted well or badly by taking the musician into his house. While dressing he mapped out the day, took his papers, gave the necessary household

## ALBERT

orders, and hurriedly put on his overcoat and shoes. Passing the dining-room door he looked in. Albert, after tossing about, had sunk his face in the pillow, and lay in his dirty ragged shirt, fast asleep on the leather sofa where he had been deposited unconscious the night before. 'There's something wrong!' thought Delésov involuntarily.

'Please go to Boryuzóvski and ask him to lend me a violin for a couple of days,' he said to his manservant. 'When he wakes up, give him coffee and let him have some underclothing and old clothes of mine. In general, make him comfortable—please!'

On returning late in the evening Delésov was surprised not to find Albert.

'Where is he?' he asked his man.

'He went away immediately after dinner,' replied the servant. 'He took the violin and went away. He promised to be back in an hour, but he's not here yet.'

'Tut, tut! How provoking!' muttered Delésov. 'Why did you let him go, Zakhár?'

Zakhár was a Petersburg valet who had been in Delésov's service for eight years. Delésov, being a lonely bachelor, could not help confiding his intentions to him, and liked to know his opinion about all his undertakings.

'How could I dare not to let him?' Zakhár replied, toying with the fob of his watch. 'If you had told me to keep him in I might have amused him at home. But you only spoke to me about clothes.'

'Pshaw! How provoking! Well, and what was he doing here without me?'

Zakhár smiled.

'One can well call him an "artist",<sup>1</sup> sir. As soon

<sup>1</sup> In addition to its proper meaning, the word 'artist' was used in Russian to denote a thief, or a man dexterous at anything, good or bad.

as he woke he asked for Madeira, and then he amused himself with the cook and with the neighbour's manservant. He is so funny. However, he is good-natured. I gave him tea and brought him dinner. He would not eat anything himself, but kept inviting me to do so. But when it comes to playing the violin, even Izler has few artists like him. One may well befriend such a man. When he played *Down the Little Mother Vólga* to us it was as if a man were weeping. It was too beautiful. Even the servants from all the flats came to our back-entrance to hear him.'

'Well, and did you get him dressed?' his master interrupted him.

'Of course. I gave him a night-shirt of yours and put my own paletot on him. A man like that is worth helping—he really is a dear fellow!' Zakhár smiled.

'He kept asking me what your rank is, whether you have influential acquaintances, and how many serfs you own.'

'Well, all right, but now he must be found, and in future don't let him have anything to drink, or it'll be worse for him.'

'That's true,' Zakhár interjected. 'He is evidently feeble; our old master had a clerk like that . . .'

} But Delésov who had long known the story of the clerk who took hopelessly to drink, did not let Zakhár finish, and telling him to get everything ready for the night, sent him out to find Albert and bring him back.

He then went to bed and put out the light, but could not fall asleep for a long time, thinking about Albert. 'Though it may seem strange to many of my acquaintances,' he thought, 'yet one so seldom does anything for others that one ought to thank God when such an opportunity presents itself, and

I will not miss it. I will do anything—positively anything in my power—to help him. He may not be mad at all, but only under the influence of drink. It won't cost me very much. Where there's enough for one there's enough for two. Let him live with me awhile, then we'll find him a place or arrange a concert for him and pull him out of the shallows, and then see what happens.'

He experienced a pleasant feeling of self-satisfaction after this reflection.

'Really I'm not altogether a bad fellow,' he thought. 'Not at all bad even—when I compare myself with others.'

He was already falling asleep when the sound of opening doors and of footsteps in the hall roused him.

'Well, I'll be stricter with him,' he thought, 'that will be best; and I must do it.'

He rang.

'Have you brought him back?' he asked when Zakhár entered.

'A pitiable man, sir,' said Zakhár, shaking his head significantly and closing his eyes.

'Is he drunk?'

'He is very weak.'

'And has he the violin?'

'I've brought it back. The lady gave it me.'

'Well, please don't let him in here now. Put him to bed, and to-morrow be sure not to let him leave the house on any account.'

But before Zakhár was out of the room Albert entered it.

## V

'Do you want to sleep already?' asked Albert with a smile. 'And I have been at Anna Ivánovna's and had a very pleasant evening. We had music, and

laughed, and there was delightful company. Let me have a glass of something,' he added, taking 'old of a water-bottle that stood on a little table, —but not water.'

Albert was just the same as he had been the previous evening: the same beautiful smile in his eyes and on his lips, the same bright inspired forehead, and the same feeble limbs. Zakhár's paletot fitted him well, and the clean wide unstarched collar of the nightshirt encircled his thin white neck picturesquely, giving him a particularly childlike and innocent look. He sat down on Delésov's bed and looked at him silently with a happy and grateful smile. Delésov looked into his eyes, and again suddenly felt himself captivated by that smile. He no longer wanted to sleep, he forgot that it was his duty to be stern: on the contrary he wished to make merry, to hear music, and to chat amicably with Albert till morning. He told Zakhár to bring a bottle of wine, some cigarettes, and the violin.

'There, that's splendid!' said Albert. 'It's still early, and we'll have some music. I'll play for you as much as you like.'

Zakhár, with evident pleasure, brought a bottle of Lafitte, two tumblers, some mild cigarettes such as Albert smoked, and the violin. But instead of going to bed as his master told him to, he himself lit a cigar and sat down in the adjoining room.

'Let us have a talk,' said Delésov to the musician, who was about to take up the violin.

Albert submissively sat down on the bed and again smiled joyfully.

'Oh yes!' said he, suddenly striking his forehead with his hand and assuming an anxiously inquisitive expression. (A change of expression always preceded anything he was about to say.)—'Allow me to ask—' he made a slight pause—'that gentle-



man who was there with you last night—you called him N—, isn't he the son of the celebrated N—?"

'His own son,' Delésov answered, not at all understanding how that could interest Albert.

'Exactly!' said Albert with a self-satisfied smile. 'I noticed at once something particularly aristocratic in his manner. I love aristocrats: there is something particularly beautiful and elegant in an aristocrat. And that officer who dances so well?' he asked. 'I liked him very much too: he is so merry and so fine. Isn't he Adjutant N. N.?'

'Which one?' asked Delésov.

'The one who bumped against me when we were dancing. He must be an excellent fellow.'

'No, he's a shallow fellow,' Delésov replied.

'Oh, no!' Albert warmly defended him. 'There is something very, very pleasant about him. He is a capital musician,' he added. 'He played something there out of an opera. It's a long time since I took such a liking to anyone.'

'Yes, he plays well, but I don't like his playing,' said Delésov, wishing to get his companion to talk about music. 'He does not understand classical music—Donizetti and Bellini, you know, are not music. You think so too, no doubt?'

'Oh, no, no, excuse me!' began Albert with a gentle, pleading look. 'The old music is music, and the new music is music. There are extraordinary beauties in the new music too. *Sonnambula*,<sup>1</sup> and the finale of *Lucia*,<sup>2</sup> and Chopin, and *Robert*!<sup>3</sup> I often think—' he paused, evidently collecting his thoughts —'that if Beethoven were alive he would weep with

<sup>1</sup> Opera by Bellini, produced in 1831.

<sup>2</sup> *Lucia di Lammermoor*, an opera by Donizetti, produced in 1835.

<sup>3</sup> *Robert the Devil*, an opera by Meyerbeer, produced in 1831, or possibly the allusion may be to *Roberto Devereux* by Donizetti.

joy listening to *Sonnambula*. There is beauty everywhere. I heard *Sonnambula* for the first time when Viardot<sup>1</sup> and Rubini<sup>2</sup> were here. It was like this . . . ' he said, and his eyes glistened as he made a gesture with both arms as though tearing something out of his breast. 'A little more and it would have been impossible to bear it.'

'And what do you think of the opera at the present time?' asked Delésov.

'Bosio<sup>3</sup> is good, very good,' he said, 'extraordinarily exquisite, but she does not touch one here,'—pointing to his sunken chest. 'A singer needs passion, and she has none. She gives pleasure but does not torment.'

'How about Lablache?'<sup>4</sup>

'I heard him in Paris in the *Barbier de Séville*. He was unique then, but now he is old: he cannot be an artist, he is old.'

'Well, what if he is old? He is still good in *morceaux d'ensemble*,' said Delésov, who was in the habit of saying that of Lablache.

'How "what if he is old?"' rejoined Albert severely. 'He should not be old. An artist should not be old. Much is needed for art, but above all, fire!' said he with glittering eyes and stretching both arms upwards.

And a terrible inner fire really seemed to burn in his whole body.

'O my God!' he suddenly exclaimed. 'Don't you know Petrów, the artist?'

<sup>1</sup> Pauline Viardot-Garcia. A celebrated operatic singer with whom Turgenev had a close friendship for many years.

<sup>2</sup> Rubini. An Italian tenor who had great success in Russia in the 'forties of the last century.

<sup>3</sup> Angidina Bosio, an Italian singer, who was in Petersburg in 1856-9.

<sup>4</sup> Luigi Lablache. He was regarded as the chief basso of modern times.

'No, I don't,' Delésov replied, smiling.

'How I should like you to make his acquaintance! You would enjoy talks with him. How well he understands art, too! I used often to meet him at Anna Ivánovna's, but now she is angry with him for some reason. I should very much like you to know him. He has great talent, great talent!'

'Does he paint now?' Delésov asked.

'I don't know, I think not, but he was an Academy artist. What ideas he has! It's wonderful when he talks sometimes. Oh, Petróv has great talent, only he leads a very gay life . . . that's a pity,' Albert added with a smile. After that he got off the bed, took the violin, and began tuning it.

'Is it long since you were at the opera?' Delésov asked.

Albert looked round and sighed.

'Ah, I can't go there any more!' he said. 'I will tell you!' And clutching his head he again sat down beside Delésov and muttered almost in a whisper: 'I can't go there. I can't play there—I have nothing—nothing! No clothes, no home, no violin. It is a miserable life! A miserable life!' he repeated several times. And why should I go there? What for? No need!' he said, smiling. 'Ah! *Don Juan* . . .'

He struck his head with his hand.

'Then let us go there together sometime,' said Delésov.

Without answering, Albert jumped up, seized the violin, and began playing the finale of the first act of *Don Juan*, telling the story of the opera in his own words.

Delésov felt the hair stir on his head as Albert played the voice of the dying commandant.

'No!' said Albert, putting down the violin. 'I cannot play to-day. I have had too much to drink.'

But after that he went up to the table, filled a

tumbler with wine, drank it at a gulp, and again sat down on Delésov's bed.

Delésov looked at Albert, not taking his eyes off him. Occasionally Albert smiled, and so did Delésov. They were both silent; but their looks and smiles created more and more affectionate relations between them. Delésov felt himself growing fonder of the man, and experienced an incomprehensible joy.

'Have you ever been in love?' he suddenly asked.

Albert thought for a few seconds, and then a sad smile lit up his face. He leaned over to Delésov and looked attentively in his eyes.

'Why have you asked me that?' he whispered. 'I will tell you everything, because I like you,' he continued, after looking at him for awhile and then glancing round. 'I won't deceive you, but will tell you everything from the beginning, just as it happened.' He stopped, his eyes wild and strangely fixed. 'You know that my mind is weak,' he suddenly said. 'Yes, yes,' he went on. 'Anna Ivánovna is sure to have told you. She tells everybody that I am mad! That is not true; she says it as a joke, she is a kindly woman, and I have really not been quite well for some time.' He stopped again and gazed with fixed wide-open eyes at the dark doorway. 'You asked whether I have been in love? . . . Yes, I have been in love,' he whispered, lifting his brows. 'It happened long ago, when I still had my job in the theatre. I used to play second violin at the Opera, and she used to have the lower-tier box next the stage, on the left.'

He got up and leaned over to Delésov's ear.

'No, why should I name her?' he said. 'You no doubt know her—everybody knows her. I kept silent and only looked at her; I knew I was a poor artist, and she an aristocratic lady. I knew that

very well. I only looked at her and planned nothing . . .'

Albert reflected, trying to remember.

'How it happened I don't remember; but I was once called in to accompany her on the violin. . . . But what was I, a poor artist?' he said, shaking his head and smiling. 'But no, I can't tell it . . .' he added, clutching his head. 'How happy I was!'

'Yes? And did you often go to her house?' Delésov asked.

'Once! Once only . . . but it was my own fault. I was mad! I was a poor artist, and she an aristocratic lady. I ought not to have said anything to her. But I went mad and acted like a fool. Since then all has been over for me. Petrów told the truth, that it would have been better for me to have seen her only at the theatre . . .'

'What was it you did?' asked Delésov.

'Ah, wait! Wait! I can't speak of that!'

With his face hidden in his hands he remained silent for some time.

'I came late to the orchestra. Petrów and I had been drinking that evening, and I was distracted. She was sitting in her box talking to a general. I don't know who that general was. She sat at the very edge of the box, with her arm on the ledge; she had on a white dress and pearls round her neck. She talked to him and looked at me. She looked at me twice. Her hair was done like this. I was not playing, but stood near the basses and looked at her. Then for the first time I felt strange. She smiled at the general and looked at me. I felt she was speaking about me, and I suddenly saw that I was not in the orchestra, but in the box beside her and holding her arm, just there. . . . How was that?' Albert asked after a short silence.

'That was vivid imagination,' said Delésov.

'No, no! . . . but I don't know how to tell it,' Albert replied, frowning. 'Even then I was poor and had no lodging, and when I went to the theatre I sometimes stayed the night there.'

'What, at the theatre? In that dark, empty place?'

'Oh, I am not afraid of such nonsense. Wait a bit. . . . When they had all gone away I would go to the box where she had been sitting and sleep there. That was my one delight. What nights I spent there! But once it began again. Many things appeared to me in the night, but I can't tell you much.' Albert glanced at Delésov with downcast eyes. 'What was it?' he asked.

'It is strange!' said Delésov.

'No, wait, wait!' he continued, whispering in Delésov's ear. 'I kissed her hand, wept there beside her, and talked much with her. I inhaled the scent of her perfume and heard her voice. She told me much in one night. Then I took my violin and played softly; and I played splendidly. But I felt frightened. I am not afraid of those foolish things and don't believe in them, but I was afraid for my head,' he said, touching his forehead with an amiable smile. 'I was frightened for my poor wits. It seemed to me that something had happened to my head. Perhaps it's nothing. What do you think?'

Both were silent for some minutes.

*'Und wenn die Wolken sie verhüllen  
Die Sonne bleibt doch ewig klar.'*<sup>1</sup>

Albert sang with a soft smile. 'Is not that so?' he added.

*'Ich auch habe gelebt und genossen . . .'*<sup>2</sup>

1 'And even if the clouds do hide it  
The sun remains for ever clear.'

'I, too, have lived and enjoyed.'

'Ah, how well old Petr6v would have explained it all to you!'

Del6sov looked silently and in terror at the pale and agitated face of his companion.

'Do you know the "*Juristen-Waltzer*"?' Albert suddenly exclaimed, and without awaiting an answer he jumped up, seized the violin, and began to play the merry waltz tune, forgetting himself completely, and evidently imagining that a whole orchestra was playing with him. He smiled, swayed, shifted his feet, and played superbly.

'Eh! Enough of merrymaking!' he said when he had finished, and flourished the violin.

'I am going,' he said, after sitting silently for awhile—'won't you come with me?'

'Where to?' Del6sov asked in surprise.

'Let's go to Anna Iv6novna's again. It's gay there—noise, people, music!'

At first Del6sov almost consented, but bethinking himself he tried to persuade Albert not to go that night.

'Only for a moment.'

'No really, you'd better not!'

Albert sighed and put down the violin.

'So I must stay here?'

And looking again at the table (there was no wine left) he said good-night and left the room.

Del6sov rang.

'See that you don't let Mr. Albert go anywhere without my permission,' he said to Zakh6r.

## VI

THE next day was a holiday. Del6sov was already awake and sitting in his drawing-room drinking coffee and reading a book. Albert had not yet stirred in the next room.

Zakhár cautiously opened the door and looked into the dining-room.

'Would you believe it, sir? He is asleep on the bare sofa! He wouldn't have anything spread on it, really. Like a little child. Truly, an artist.'

Towards noon groaning and coughing were heard through the door.

Zakhár again went into the dining-room, and Delésov could hear his kindly voice and Albert's weak, entreating one.

'Well?' he asked, when Zakhár returned.

'He's fretting, sir, won't wash, and seems gloomy. He keeps asking for a drink.'

'No. Having taken this matter up I must show character,' said Delésov to himself.

He ordered that no wine should be given to Albert and resumed his book, but involuntarily listened to what was going on in the dining-room. There was no sound of movement there and an occasional deep cough and spitting was all that could be heard. Two hours passed. Having dressed, Delésov decided to look in at his visitor before going out. Albert was sitting motionless at the window, his head resting on his hand. He looked round. His face was yellow, wrinkled, and not merely sad but profoundly miserable. He tried to smile by way of greeting, but his face took on a still more sorrowful expression. He seemed ready to cry. He rose with difficulty and bowed.

'If I might just have a glass of simple vodka!' he said with a look of entreaty. 'I am so weak—please!'

'Coffee will do you more good. Have some of that instead.'

Albert's face suddenly lost its childlike expression; he looked coldly, dim-eyed, out of the window, and sank feebly onto his chair.



'Or would you like some lunch?'

'No thank you, I have no appetite.'

'If you wish to play the violin you will not disturb me,' said Delésov, laying the violin on the table.

Albert looked at the violin with a contemptuous smile.

'No,' he said. 'I am too weak, I can't play,' and he pushed the instrument away from him.

After that, whatever Delésov might say, offering to go for a walk with him, and to the theatre in the evening, he only bowed humbly and remained stubbornly silent. Delésov went out, paid several calls, dined with friends, and before going to the theatre returned home to change and to see what the musician was doing. Albert was sitting in the dark hall, leaning his head in his hands and looking at the heated stove. He was neatly dressed, washed, and his hair was brushed; but his eyes were dim and lifeless, and his whole figure expressed weakness and exhaustion even more than in the morning.

'Have you dined, Mr. Albert?' asked Delésov.

Albert made an affirmative gesture with his head and, after a frightened look at Delésov, lowered his eyes. Delésov felt uncomfortable.

'I spoke to the director of the theatre about you to-day,' he said, also lowering his eyes. 'He will be very glad to receive you if you will let him hear you.'

'Thank you, I cannot play!' muttered Albert under his breath, and went into his room, shutting the door behind him very softly.

A few minutes later the door-knob was turned just as gently, and he came out of the room with the violin. With a rapid and hostile glance at Delésov he placed the violin on a chair and disappeared again.

Delésov shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

‘What more am I to do? In what am I to blame?’ he thought.

‘Well, how is the musician?’ was his first question when he returned home late that evening.

‘Bad!’ said Zakhár, briefly and clearly. ‘He has been sighing and coughing and says nothing, except that he started begging for vodka four or five times. At last I gave him one glass—or else we might finish him off, sir. Just like the clerk . . .’

‘Has he not played the violin?’

‘Didn’t even touch it. I took it to him a couple of times, but he just took it up gently and brought it out again,’ Zakhár answered with a smile. ‘So your orders are not to give him any drink?’

‘No, we’ll wait another day and see what happens. And what’s he doing now?’

‘He has locked himself up in the drawing-room.’

Delésov went into his study and chose several French books and a German Bible. ‘Put these books in his room to-morrow, and see that you don’t let him out,’ he said to Zakhár.

Next morning Zakhár informed his master that the musician had not slept all night: he had paced up and down the rooms, and had been into the pantry, trying to open the cupboard and the door, but he (Zakhár) had taken care to lock everything up. He said that while he pretended to be asleep he had heard Albert in the dark muttering something to himself and waving his arms about.

Albert grew gloomier and more taciturn every day. He seemed to be afraid of Delésov, and when their eyes met his face expressed sickly fear. He did not touch the books or the violin, and did not reply to questions put to him.

On the third day of the musician’s stay Delésov returned home late, tired and upset. He had been driving about all day attending to a matter that had

## ALBERT

promised to be very simple and easy but, as often happens, in spite of strenuous efforts he had been quite unable to advance a single step with it. Besides that he had called in at his club and had lost at whist. He was in bad spirits.

'Well, let him go his way!' he said to Zakhár, who told him of Albert's sad plight. 'To-morrow I'll get a definite answer out of him, whether he wants to stay here and follow my advice, or not. If not, he needn't! It seems to me that I have done all I could.'

'There now, try doing good to people!' he thought to himself. 'I put myself out for him, I keep that dirty creature in my house, so that I can't receive a visitor in the morning. I bustle and run about, and he looks on me as if I were a villain who for his own pleasure has locked him up in a cage. And above all, he won't take a single step to help himself. They are all like that.' (The 'they' referred to people in general, and especially to those with whom he had had business that day.) 'And what is the matter with him now? What is he thinking about and pining for? Pining for the debauchery from which I have dragged him? For the humiliation in which he was? For the destitution from which I have saved him? Evidently he has fallen so low that it hurts him to see a decent life . . .'

'No, it was a childish act,' Delésov concluded. 'How can I improve others, when God knows whether I can manage myself?' He thought of setting Albert go at once, but after a little reflection put it off till the next day.

During the night he was roused by the sound of a table falling in the hall, and the sound of voices and footsteps. He lighted a candle and listened in surprise.

'Wait a bit. I'll tell my master,' Zakhár was saying; Albert's voice muttered something incoherently and heatedly. Delésov jumped up and ran into the hall with the candle. Zakhár stood against the front door in his night attire, and Albert, with his hat and cloak on, was pushing him aside and shouting in a tearful voice:

'You can't keep me here! I have a passport,<sup>1</sup> and have taken nothing of yours. You may search me. I shall go to the chief of police! . . .'

'Excuse me, sir!' Zakhár said, addressing his master while continuing to guard the door with his back. 'He got up during the night, found the key in my overcoat pocket, and drank a whole decanter of liqueur vodka. Is that right? And now he wants to go away. You ordered me not to let him out, so I dare not let him go.'

On seeing Delésov Albert made for Zakhár still more excitedly.

'No one dare hold me! No one has a right to!' he shouted, raising his voice more and more.

'Step aside, Zakhár!' said Delésov. 'I can't and don't want to keep you, but I advise you to stay till the morning,' he said to Albert.

'No one can keep me! I'll go to the chief of police!' Albert cried louder and louder, addressing himself to Zakhár alone and not looking at Delésov. 'Help!' he suddenly screamed in a furious voice.

'What are you screaming like that for? Nobody is keeping you!' said Zakhár, opening the door.

Albert stopped shouting. 'You didn't succeed, did you? Wanted to do for me—did you!' he muttered to himself, putting on his goloshes. Without taking leave, and continuing to mutter in-

<sup>1</sup> To be free to go from place to place it was necessary to have a properly stamped passport from the police.

coherently, he went out. Zakhár held a light for him as far as the gate, and then came back.

'Well, God be thanked, sir!' he said to his master. 'Who knows what might happen? As it is I must count the silver plate . . .'

Delésov merely shook his head and did not reply. He vividly recalled the first two evenings he had spent with the musician, and recalled the last sad days which by his fault Albert had spent there, and above all he recalled that sweet, mixed feeling of surprise, affection and pity, which that strange man had aroused in him at first sight, and he felt sorry for him. 'And what will become of him now?' he thought. 'Without money, without warm clothing, alone in the middle of the night . . .' He was about to send Zakhár after him, but it was too late.

'Is it cold outside?' he inquired.

'A hard frost, sir,' replied Zakhár. 'I forgot to inform you, but we shall have to buy more wood for fuel before the spring.'

'How is that? You said that we should have some left over.'

## VII

It was indeed cold outside, but Albert, heated by the liquor he had drunk and by the dispute, did not feel it. On reaching the street he looked round and rubbed his hands joyfully. The street was empty, but the long row of lamps still burned with ruddy light; the sky was clear and starry. 'There now!' he said, addressing the lighted window of Delésov's lodging, thrusting his hands into his trouser pockets under his cape, and stooping forward. He went with heavy, uncertain steps down the street to the right. He felt an unusual weight in his legs and stomach, something made a noise in his head, and some invisible force was throwing him from side to side,

but he still went on in the direction of Anna Ivánovna's house. Strange, incoherent thoughts passed through his mind. Now he remembered his last altercation with Zakhár, then for some reason the sea and his first arrival in Russia by steamboat, then a happy night he had passed with a friend in a small shop he was passing, then suddenly a familiar motif began singing itself in his imagination, and he remembered the object of his passion and the dreadful night in the theatre. Despite their incoherence all these memories presented themselves so clearly to his mind that, closing his eyes, he did not know which was the more real: what he was doing, or what he was thinking. He did not realize or feel how his legs were moving, how he swayed and bumped against the wall, how he looked around him, or passed from street to street. He realized and felt only the things that, intermingling and fantastically following one another, rose in his imagination.

Passing along the Little Morskáya Street, Albert stumbled and fell. Coming to his senses for a moment he saw an immense and splendid building before him and went on. In the sky no stars, nor moon, nor dawn, were visible, nor were there any street lamps, but everything was clearly outlined. In the windows of the building that towered at the end of the street lights were shining, but those lights quivered like reflections. The building stood out nearer and nearer and clearer and clearer before him. But the lights disappeared directly he entered the wide portals. All was dark within. Solitary footsteps resounded under the vaulted ceiling, and some shadows slid rapidly away as he approached. 'Why have I come here?' thought he; but some irresistible force drew him on into the depths of the immense hall. There was some kind of platform, around

which some small people stood silently. 'Who is going to speak?' asked Albert. No one replied, except that someone pointed to the platform. A tall thin man with bristly hair and wearing a parti-coloured dressing-gown was already standing there, and Albert immediately recognized his friend Petr6v. 'How strange that he should be here!' thought he. 'No, brothers!' Petr6v was saying, pointing to someone. 'You did not understand a man living among you; you have not understood him! He is not a mercenary artist, not a mechanical performer, not a lunatic or a lost man. He is a genius—a great musical genius who has perished among you unnoticed and unappreciated!' Albert at once understood of whom his friend was speaking, but not wishing to embarrass him he modestly lowered his head.

'The holy fire that we all serve has consumed him like a blade of straw!' the voice went on, 'but he has fulfilled all that God implanted in him and should therefore be called a great man. You could despise, torment, humiliate him,' the voice continued, growing louder and louder—'but he was, is, and will be, immeasurably higher than you all. He is happy, he is kind. He loves or despises all alike, but serves only that which was implanted in him from above. He loves but one thing—beauty, the one indubitable blessing in the world. Yes, such is the man! Fall prostrate before him, all of you! On your knees!' he cried aloud.

But another voice came mildly from the opposite corner of the hall: 'I do not wish to bow my knees before him,' said the voice, which Albert immediately recognized as Del6sov's. 'Wherein is he great? Why should we bow before him? Did he behave honourably and justly? Has he been of any use to society? Don't we know how he borrowed money

id **did** not return it, and how he carried away his low-artist's violin and pawned it? . . . ' (O God, how does he know all that?' thought Albert, hanging his head still lower.) 'Do we not know how he flattered the most insignificant people, flattered them for the sake of money?' Delésov continued— 'Don't we know how he was expelled from the theatre? And how Anna Ivánovna wanted to send him to the police?' ('O God! That is all true, but defend me, Thou who alone knowest why I did it!' muttered Albert.)

'Cease, for shame!' Petrón's voice began again. 'What right have you to accuse him? Have you lived his life? Have you experienced his rapture?' ('True, true!' whispered Albert.) 'Art is the highest manifestation of power in man. It is given to a few of the elect, and raises the chosen one to such a height as turns the head and makes it difficult for him to remain sane. In Art, as in every struggle, there are heroes who have devoted themselves entirely to its service and have perished without having reached the goal.' Petrón stopped, and Albert raised his head and cried out: 'True, true!' but his voice died away without a sound.

'It does not concern you,' said the artist Petrón, turning to him severely. 'Yes, humiliate and despise him,' he continued, 'but yet he is the best and happiest of you all.'

Albert, who had listened to these words with rapture in his soul, could not restrain himself, and went up to his friend wishing to kiss him.

'Go away! I do not know you!' Petrón said. 'Go your way, or you won't get there.'

'Just see how the drink's got hold of you! You won't get there,' shouted a policeman at the crossroad.

Albert stopped, collected his strength and, trying not to stagger, turned into the side street.



Only a few more steps were left to Anna Ivánovna's door. From the hall of her house the light fell on the snow in the courtyard, and sledges and carriages stood at the gate.

Holding onto the banister with his numbed hands, he ran up the steps and rang. The sleepy face of a maid appeared in the opening of the doorway, and she looked angrily at Albert. 'You can't!' she cried. 'The orders are not to let you in,' and she slammed the door to. The sound of music and of women's voices reached the steps. Albert sat down, leaned his head against the wall, and closed his eyes. Immediately a throng of disconnected but kindred visions beset him with renewed force, engulfed him in their waves, and bore him away into the free and beautiful realm of dreams. 'Yes, he was the best and happiest!' ran involuntarily through his imagination. The sounds of a polka came through the door. These sounds also told him that he was the best and happiest. The bells in the nearest church rang out for early service, and these bells also said: 'Yes, he is the best and happiest!' . . . 'I will go back to the hall,' thought Albert. 'Petróv must tell me much more.' But there was no one in the hall now, and instead of the artist Petróv, Albert himself stood on the platform and played on the violin all that the voice had said before. But the violin was of strange construction; it was made of glass and it had to be held in both hands and slowly pressed to the breast to make it produce sounds. The sounds were the most delicate and delightful Albert had ever heard. The closer he pressed the violin to his breast the more joyful and tender he felt. The louder the sounds grew the faster the shadows dispersed and the brighter the walls of the hall were lit up by transparent light. But it was necessary to play the violin very warily so as not to

break it. He played the glass instrument very carefully and well. He played such things as he felt no one would ever hear again. He was beginning to grow tired when another distant, muffled sound distracted his attention. It was the sound of a bell, but it spoke words: 'Yes,' said the bell, droning somewhere high up and far away, 'he seems to you pitiful, you despise him, yet he is the best and happiest of men! No one will ever again play that instrument.'

These familiar words suddenly seemed so wise, so new, and so true, to Albert that he stopped playing and, trying not to move, raised his arms and eyes to heaven. He felt that he was beautiful and happy. Although there was no one else in the hall he expanded his chest and stood on the platform with head proudly erect so that all might see him. Suddenly someone's hand lightly touched his shoulder; he turned and saw a woman in the faint light. She looked at him sadly and shook her head deprecatingly. He immediately realized that what he was doing was bad, and felt ashamed of himself. 'Whither?' he asked her. She again gave him a long fixed look and sadly inclined her head. It was she—none other than she whom he loved, and her garments were the same; on her full white neck a string of pearls, and her superb arms bare to above the elbow. She took his hand and led him out of the hall. 'The exit is on the other side,' said Albert, but without replying she smiled and led him out. At the threshold of the hall Albert saw the moon and some water. But the water was not below as it usually is, nor was the moon a white circle in one place up above as it usually is. Moon and water were together and everywhere—above, below, at the sides, and all around them both. Albert threw himself with her into the moon and the water, and

realized that he could now embrace her, whom he loved more than anything in the world. He embraced her and felt unutterable happiness. 'Is this not a dream?' he asked himself. But no! It was more than reality: it was reality and recollection combined. Then he felt that the unutterable bliss he had at that moment enjoyed had passed and would never return. 'What am I weeping for?' he asked her. She looked at him silently and sadly. Albert understood what she meant by that. 'But how can it be, since I am alive?' he muttered. Without replying or moving she looked straight before her. 'This is terrible! How can I explain to her that I am alive?' he thought with horror. 'O Lord! I am alive, do understand me!' he whispered.

'He is the best and happiest!' a voice was saying. But something was pressing more and more heavily on Albert. Whether it was the moon and the water, her embraces, or his tears, he did not know, but he felt he would not be able to say all that was necessary, and that soon all would be over.

Two visitors, leaving Anna Ivánovna's house, stumbled over Albert, who lay stretched out on the threshold. One of them went back and called the hostess.

'Why, this is inhuman!' he said. 'You might let a man freeze like that!'

'Ah, that Albert! I'm sick to death of him!' replied the hostess. 'Ánnushka, lay him down somewhere in a room,' she said to the maid.

'But I am alive—why bury me?' muttered Albert, as they carried him insensible into the room.

## THREE DEATHS



# THREE DEATHS

## A TALE

### I

IT was autumn. Two vehicles were going along the highway at a quick trot. In the first sat two women: a lady, thin and pale, and a maidservant, plump and rosy and shining. The maid's short dry hair escaped from under her faded bonnet and her red hand in its torn glove kept pushing it back by fits and starts; her full bosom, covered by a woollen shawl, breathed health, her quick black eyes now watched the fields as they glided past the window, now glanced timidly at her mistress, and now restlessly scanned the corners of the carriage. In front of her nose dangled her mistress's bonnet, pinned to the luggage carrier, on her lap lay a puppy, her feet were raised on the boxes standing on the floor and just audibly tapped against them to the creaking of the coach-springs and the clatter of the window panes.

Having folded her hands on her knees and closed her eyes, the lady swayed feebly against the pillows placed at her back, and, frowning slightly, coughed inwardly. On her head she had a white nightcap, and a blue kerchief was tied round her delicate white throat. A straight line receding under the cap parted her light brown, extremely flat, pomaded hair, and there was something dry and deathly about the whiteness of the skin of that wide parting. Her features were delicate and handsome, but her skin was flabby and rather sallow, though there was a hectic flush on her cheeks. Her lips were dry and restless, her scanty eyelashes had no curl in them, and her cloth travelling coat fell in straight

folds over a sunken breast. Though her eyes were closed her face bore an expression of weariness, irritation, and habitual suffering.

A footman, leaning on the arms of his seat, was dozing on the box. The mail-coach driver, shouting lustily, urged on his four big sweating horses, occasionally turning to the other driver who called to him from the calèche behind. The broad parallel tracks of the tyres spread themselves evenly and fast on the muddy, chalky surface of the road. The sky was grey and cold and a damp mist was settling on the fields and road. It was stuffy in the coach and there was a smell of Eau-de-Cologne and dust. The invalid drew back her head and slowly opened her beautiful dark eyes, which were large and brilliant.

'Again,' she said, nervously pushing away with her beautiful thin hand an end of her maid's cloak which had lightly touched her foot, and her mouth twitched painfully. Matresha gathered up her cloak with both hands, rose on her strong legs, and seated herself farther away, while her fresh face grew scarlet. The lady, leaning with both hands on the seat, also tried to raise herself so as to sit up higher, but her strength failed her. Her mouth twisted, and her whole face became distorted by a look of impotent malevolence and irony. 'You might at least help me! . . . No, don't bother! I can do it myself, only don't put your bags or anything behind me, for goodness' sake! . . . No, better not touch me since you don't know how to!' The lady closed her eyes and then, again quickly raising her eyelids, glared at the maid. Matrësha, looking at her, bit her red nether lip. A deep sigh rose from the invalid's chest and turned into a cough before it was completed. She turned away, puckered her face, and clutched her chest with both hands. When the coughing fit was over she once more closed her

### THREE DEATHS

eyes and continued to sit motionless. The carriage and calèche entered a village. Matrësha stretched out her thick hand from under her shawl and crossed herself.

'What is it?' asked her mistress.

'A post-station, madam.'

'I am asking why you crossed yourself.'

'There's a church, madam.'

The invalid turned to the window and began slowly to cross herself, looking with large wide-open eyes at the big village church her carriage was passing.

The carriage and calèche both stopped at the post-station and the invalid's husband and doctor stepped out of the calèche and went up to the coach.

'How are you feeling?' asked the doctor, taking her pulse.

'Well, my dear, how are you -- not tired?' asked the husband in French. 'Wouldn't you like to get out?'

Matrësha, gathering up the bundles, squeezed herself into a corner so as not to interfere with their conversation.

'Nothing much, just the same,' replied the invalid. 'I won't get out.'

Her husband after standing there a while went into the station-house, and Matrësha, too, jumped out of the carriage and ran on tiptoe across the mud and in at the gate.

'If I feel ill, it's no reason for you not to have lunch,' said the sick woman with a slight smile to the doctor, who was standing at her window.

'None of them has any thought for me,' she added to herself as soon as the doctor, having slowly walked away from her, ran quickly up the steps to the station-house. 'They are well, so they don't care. Oh, my God!'



'Well, Edward Ivánovich?' said the husband, rubbing his hands as he met the doctor with a merry smile. 'I have ordered the lunch-basket to be brought in. What do you think about it?'

'A capital idea,' replied the doctor.

'Well, how is she?' asked the husband with a sigh, lowering his voice and lifting his eyebrows.

'As I told you: it is impossible for her to reach Italy—God grant that she gets even as far as Moscow, especially in this weather.'

'But what are we to do? Oh, my God, my God!' and the husband hid his eyes with his hand. 'Bring it here!' he said to the man who had brought in the lunch-basket.

'She ought to have stayed at home,' said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders.

'But what could I do?' rejoined the husband. 'You know I used every possible means to get her to stay. I spoke of the expense, of our children whom we had to leave behind, and of my business affairs, but she would not listen to anything. She is making plans for life abroad as if she were in good health. To tell her of her condition would be to kill her.'

'But she is killed already—you must know that, Vasíli Dmítrich. A person can't live without lungs, and new lungs won't grow. It is sad and hard, but what is to be done? My business and yours is to see that her end is made as peaceful as possible. It's a priest who is needed for that.'

'Oh, my God! Think of my condition, having to remind her about her will. Come what may I can't tell her that, you know how good she is . . .'

'Still, try to persuade her to wait till the roads are fit for sledging,' said the doctor, shaking his head significantly, 'or something bad may happen on the journey.'

'Aksyúsha, hello Aksyúsha!' yelled the station-

master's daughter, throwing her jacket over her head and stamping her feet on the muddy back porch. 'Come and let's have a look at the Shírkin lady: they say she is being taken abroad for a chest trouble, and I've never seen what consumptive people look like!'

She jumped onto the threshold, and seizing one another by the hand the two girls ran out of the gate. Checking their pace, they passed by the coach and looked in at the open window. The invalid turned her head towards them but, noticing their curiosity, frowned and turned away.

'De-arie me!' said the station-master's daughter, quickly turning her head away. 'What a wonderful beauty she must have been, and see what she's like now! It's dreadful. Did you see, did you, Aksyúsha?'

'Yes, how thin!' Aksyúsha agreed. 'Let's go and look again, as if we were going to the well. See, she has turned away, and I hadn't seen her yet. What a pity, Másha!'

'Yes, and what mud!' said Másha, and they both ran through the gate.

'Evidently I look frightful,' thought the invalid. 'If only I could get abroad quicker, quicker. I should soon recover there.'

'Well, my dear, how are you?' said her husband, approaching her and still chewing.

'Always the same question,' thought the invalid, 'and he himself is eating.'

'So-so,' she murmured through her closed teeth.

'You know, my dear, I'm afraid you'll get worse travelling in this weather, and Edward Ivánovich says so too. Don't you think we'd better turn back?'

She remained angrily silent.

'The weather will perhaps improve and the roads be fit for sledging; you will get better meanwhile, and we will all go together.'

'Excuse me. If I had not listened to you for so long, I should now at least have reached Berlin, and have been quite well.'

'What could be done, my angel? You know : was impossible. But now if you stayed another month you would get nicely better, I should have finished my business, and we could take the children with us.'

'The children are well, but I am not.'

'But do understand, my dear, that if in this weather you should get worse on the road. . . . At least you would be at home.'

'What of being at home? . . . To die at home?' answered the invalid, flaring up. But the word 'die' evidently frightened her, and she looked imploringly and questioningly at her husband. He hung his head and was silent. The invalid's mouth suddenly widened like a child's, and tears rolled down her cheeks. Her husband hid his face in his handkerchief and stepped silently away from the carriage.

'No, I will go on,' said the invalid, and lifting her eyes to the sky she folded her hands and began whispering incoherent words: 'Oh, my God, what is it for?' she said, and her tears flowed faster. She prayed long and fervently, but her chest ached and felt as tight as before; the sky, the fields, and the road were just as grey and gloomy, and the autumnal mist fell, neither thickening nor lifting, and settled on the muddy road, the roofs, the carriage, and the sheepskin coats of the drivers, who talking in their strong merry voices were greasing the wheels and harnessing the horses.

## II

THE carriage was ready but the driver still loitered. He had gone into the drivers' room at the station.

It was hot, stuffy, and dark there, with an oppressive smell of baking bread, cabbage, sheepskin garments, and humanity. Several drivers were sitting in the room, and a cook was busy at the oven, on the top of which lay a sick man wrapped in sheepskins.

'Uncle Theodore! I say, Uncle Theodore!' said the young driver, entering the room in his sheepskin coat with a whip stuck in his belt, and addressing the sick man.

'What do you want Theodore for, lazybones?' asked one of the drivers. 'There's your carriage waiting for you.'

'I want to ask for his boots; mine are quite worn out,' answered the young fellow, tossing back his hair and straightening the mittens tucked in his belt. 'Is he asleep? I say, Uncle Theodore!' he repeated, walking over to the oven.

'What is it?' answered a weak voice, and a lean face with a red beard looked down from the oven, while a broad, emaciated, pale, and hairy hand pulled up the coat over the dirty shirt covering his angular shoulder.

'Give me a drink, lad. . . . What is it you want?'

The lad handed him up a dipper with water.

'Well, you see, Theodore,' he said, stepping from foot to foot, 'I expect you don't need your new boots now; won't you let me have them? I don't suppose you'll go about any more.'

The sick man, lowering his weary head to the shiny dipper and immersing his sparse drooping moustache in the turbid water, drank feebly but eagerly. His matted beard was dirty, and his sunken clouded eyes had difficulty in looking up at the lad's face. Having finished drinking he tried to lift his hand to wipe his wet lips, but he could not do so, and rubbed them on the sleeve of his coat instead. Silently, and breathing heavily through

his nose, he looked straight into the lad's eyes, collecting his strength.

'But perhaps you have promised them to someone else?' asked the lad. 'If so, it's all right. The worst of it is, it's wet outside and I have to go about my work, so I said to myself: "Suppose I ask Theodore for his boots; I expect he doesn't need them." If you need them yourself—just say so.'

Something began to rumble and gurgle in the sick man's chest; he doubled up and began to choke with an abortive cough in his throat.

'Need them indeed!' the cook snapped out unexpectedly so as to be heard by the whole room. 'He hasn't come down from the oven for more than a month! Hear how he's choking—it makes me ache inside just to hear him. What does he want with boots? They won't bury him in new boots. And it was time long ago—God forgive me the sin! See how he chokes. He ought to be taken into the other room or somewhere. They say there are hospitals in the town. Is it right that he should take up the whole corner?—there's no more to be said. I've no room at all, and yet they expect cleanliness!'

'Hullo, Sergéy! Come along and take your place the gentlefolk are waiting!' shouted the drivers' overseer, looking in at the door.

Sergéy was about to go without waiting for a reply, but the sick man, while coughing, let him understand by a look that he wanted to give him an answer.

'Take my boots, Sergéy,' he said when he had mastered the cough and rested a moment. 'But listen. . . . Buy a stone for me when I die,' he added hoarsely.

'Thank you, uncle. Then I'll take them, and I'll buy a stone for sure.'

'There, lads, you heard that?' the sick man managed to utter, and then bent double again and began to choke.

'All right, we heard,' said one of the drivers. 'Go and take your seat, Sergéy, there's the overseer running back. The Shírkin lady is ill, you know.'

Sergéy quickly pulled off his unduly big, dilapidated boots and threw them under a bench. Uncle Theodore's new boots just fitted him, and having put them on he went to the carriage with his eyes fixed on his feet.

'What fine boots! Let me grease them,' said a driver, who held some axle-grease in his hand, as Sergéy climbed onto the box and gathered up the reins. 'Did he give them to you for nothing?'

'Why, are you envious?' Sergéy replied, rising and wrapping the skirts of his coat under his legs. 'Off with you! Gee up, my beauties!' he shouted to the horses, flourishing the whip, and the carriage and calèche with their occupants, portmanteaux, and trunks rolled rapidly along the wet road and disappeared in the grey autumnal mist.

The sick driver was left on the top of the oven in the stuffy room and, unable to relieve himself by coughing, turned with an effort onto his other side and became silent.

Till late in the evening people came in and out of the room and dined there. The sick man made no sound. When night came, the cook climbed up onto the oven and stretched over his legs to get down her sheepskin coat.

'Don't be cross with me, Nastásya,' said the sick man. 'I shall soon leave your corner empty.'

'All right, all right, never mind,' muttered Nastásya. 'But what is it that hurts you? Tell me, uncle.'

'My whole inside has wasted away. God knows what it is!'

'I suppose your throat hurts when you cough?'

'Everything hurts. My death has come—that's how it is. Oh, oh, oh!' moaned the sick man.

'Cover up your feet like this,' said Nastásya, drawing his coat over him as she climbed down from the oven.

A night-light burnt dimly in the room. Nastásya and some ten drivers slept on the floor or on the benches, loudly snoring. The sick man groaned feebly, coughed, and turned about on the oven. Towards morning he grew quite quiet.

'I had a queer dream last night,' said Nastásya next morning, stretching herself in the dim light. 'I dreamt that Uncle Theodore got down from the oven and went out to chop wood. "Come, Nastásya," he says, "I'll help you!" and I say, "How can you chop wood now?"', but he just seizes the axe and begins chopping quickly, quickly, so that the chips fly all about. "Why," I say, "haven't you been ill?" "No," he says, "I am well," and he swings the axe so that I was quite frightened. I gave a cry and woke up. I wonder whether he is dead! Uncle Theodore! I say, Uncle Theodore!'

Theodore did not answer.

'True enough he may have died. I'll go and see,' said one of the drivers, waking up.

The lean hand covered with reddish hair that hung down from the oven was pale and cold.

'I'll go and tell the station-master,' said the driver. 'I think he is dead.'

Theodore had no relatives: he was from some distant place. They buried him next day in the new cemetery beyond the wood, and Nastásya went on for days telling everybody of her dream, and of having been the first to discover that Uncle Theodore was dead.

## III

SPRING had come. Rivulets of water hurried down the wet streets of the city, gurgling between lumps of frozen manure; the colours of the people's clothes as they moved along the streets looked vivid and their voices sounded shrill. Behind the garden-fences the buds on the trees were swelling and their branches were just audibly swaying in the fresh breeze. Everywhere transparent drops were forming and falling. . . . The sparrows chirped, and fluttered awkwardly with their little wings. On the sunny side of the street, on the fences, houses, and trees, everything was in motion and sparkling. There was joy and youth everywhere in the sky, on the earth, and in the hearts of men.

In one of the chief streets fresh straw had been strewn on the road before a large, important house, where the invalid who had been in a hurry to go abroad lay dying.

At the closed door of her room stood the invalid's husband and an elderly woman. On the sofa a priest sat with bowed head, holding something wrapped in his stole. In a corner of the room the sick woman's old mother lay on an invalid chair weeping bitterly; beside her stood one maidservant holding a clean handkerchief, waiting for her to ask for it; while another was rubbing her temples with something and blowing under the old lady's cap onto her grey head.

'Well, may Christ aid you, dear friend,' the husband said to the elderly woman who stood near him at the door. 'She has such confidence in you and you know so well how to talk to her, so persuade her as well as you can, my dear—go to her.' He was about to open the door, but her cousin stopped him,



pressing her handkerchief several times to her eyes and giving her head a shake.

'Well, I don't think I look as if I had been crying now,' said she and, opening the door herself, went in.

The husband was in great agitation and seemed quite distracted. He walked towards the old woman, but while still several steps from her turned back, walked about the room, and went up to the priest. The priest looked at him, raised his eyebrows to heaven, and sighed: his thick, greyish beard also rose as he sighed and then came down again.

'My God, my God!' said the husband.

'What is to be done?' said the priest with a sigh, and again his eyebrows and beard rose and fell.

'And her mother is here!' said the husband almost in despair. 'She won't be able to bear it. You see, loving her as she does . . . I don't know! If you would only try to comfort her, Father, and persuade her to go away.'

The priest got up and went to the old woman.

'It is true, no one can appreciate a mother's heart,' he said—'but God is merciful.'

The old woman's face suddenly twitched all over, and she began to hiccup hysterically.

'God is merciful,' the priest continued when she grew a little calmer. 'Let me tell you of a patient in my parish who was much worse than Mary Dmítrievna, and a simple tradesman cured her in a short time with various herbs. That tradesman is even now in Moscow. I told Vasíli Dmítrich—we might try him. . . . It would at any rate comfort the invalid. To God all is possible.'

'No, she will not live,' said the old woman. 'God is taking her instead of me,' and the hysterical hiccuping grew so violent that she fainted.

The sick woman's husband hid his face in his hands and ran out of the room.

In the passage the first person he met was his six-year-old son, who was running full speed after his younger sister.

'Won't you order the children to be taken to their mamma?' asked the nurse.

'No, she doesn't want to see them—it would upset her.'

The boy stopped a moment, looked intently into his father's face, then gave a kick and ran on, shouting merrily.

'She pretends to be the black horse, Papa!' he shouted, pointing to his sister.

Meanwhile in the other room the cousin sat down beside the invalid, and tried by skilful conversation to prepare her for the thought of death. The doctor was mixing a draught at another window.

The patient, in a white dressing gown, sat up in bed supported all round by pillows, and looked at her cousin in silence.

'Ah, my dear friend,' she said, unexpectedly interrupting her, 'don't prepare me! Don't treat me like a child. I am a Christian. I know it all. I know I have not long to live, and know that if my husband had listened to me sooner I should now have been in Italy and perhaps—no, certainly—should have been well. Everybody told him so. But what is to be done? Evidently this is God's wish. We have all sinned heavily. I know that, but I trust in God's mercy everybody will be forgiven, probably all will be forgiven. I try to understand myself. I have many sins to answer for, dear friend, but then how much I have had to suffer! I try to bear my sufferings patiently . . .'

'Then shall I call the priest, my dear? You will

feel still more comfortable after receiving communion,' said her cousin.

'The sick woman bent her head in assent.

'God forgive me, sinner that I am!' she whispered.

The cousin went out and signalled with her eyes to the priest.

'She is an angel!' she said to the husband, with tears in her eyes. The husband burst into tears; the priest went into the next room; the invalid's mother was still unconscious, and all was silent there. Five minutes later he came out again, and after taking off his stole, straightened out his hair.

'Thank God she is calmer now,' she said, 'and wishes to see you.'

The cousin and the husband went into the sick-room. The invalid was silently weeping, gazing at an icon.

'I congratulate you, my dear,'<sup>1</sup> said her husband.

'Thank you! How well I feel now, what inexpressible sweetness I feel!' said the sick woman, and a soft smile played on her thin lips. 'How merciful God is! Is He not? Merciful and all powerful!' and again she looked at the icon with eager entreaty and her eyes full of tears.

Then suddenly, as if she remembered something, she beckoned to her husband to come closer.

'You never want to do what I ask . . .' she said in a feeble and dissatisfied voice.

The husband, craning his neck, listened to her humbly.

'What is it, my dear?'

'How many times have I not said that these doctors don't know anything; there are simple women who can heal, and who do cure. The priest told me . . . there is also a tradesman . . . Send!'

<sup>1</sup> It was customary in Russia to congratulate people who had received communion.

‘For whom, my dear?’

‘O God, you don’t want to understand anything!’  
And the sick woman’s face puckered and she closed her eyes.

The doctor came up and took her hand. Her pulse was beating more and more feebly. He glanced at the husband. The invalid noticed that gesture and looked round in affright. The cousin turned away and began to cry.

‘Don’t cry, don’t torture yourself and me,’ said the patient. ‘Don’t take from me the last of my tranquillity.’

‘You are an angel,’ said the cousin, kissing her hand.

‘No, kiss me here! Only dead people are kissed on the hand. My God, my God!’

That same evening the patient was a corpse, and the body lay in a coffin in the music room of the large house. A deacon sat alone in that big room reading the psalms of David through his nose in a monotonous voice. A bright light from the wax candles in their tall silver candlesticks fell on the pale brow of the dead woman, on her heavy wax-like hands, on the stiff folds of the pall which brought out in awesome relief the knees and the toes. The deacon without understanding the words read on monotonously, and in the quiet room the words sounded strangely and died away. Now and then from a distant room came the sounds of children’s voices and the patter of their feet.

‘Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled,’ said the psalter. ‘Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever.’

The dead woman’s face looked stern and majestic.

Neither in the clear cold brow nor in the firmly closed lips was there any movement. She seemed all attention. But had she even now understood those solemn words?

#### IV

A MONTH later a stone chapel was being erected over the grave of the deceased woman. Over the driver's tomb there was still no stone, and only the light green grass sprouted on the mound which served as the only token of the past existence of a man.

'It will be a sin, Sergéy,' said the cook at the station-house one day, 'if you don't buy a stone for Theodore. You kept saying "It's winter, it's winter!" but why don't you keep your word now? You know I witnessed it. He has already come back once to ask you to do it; if you don't buy him one, he'll come again and choke you.'

'But why? I'm not backing out of it,' replied Sergéy. 'I'll buy a stone as I said I would, and give a ruble and a half for it. I haven't forgotten it, but it has to be fetched. When I happen to be in town I'll buy one.'

'You might at least put up a cross—you ought to, —else it's really wrong,' interposed an old driver. 'You know you are wearing his boots.'

'Where can I get a cross? I can't cut one out of a log.'

'What do you mean, can't cut one out of a log? You take an axe and go into the forest early, and you can cut one there. Cut down a young ash or something like that, and you can make a cross of it . . . you may have to treat the forester to vodka; but one can't afford to treat him for every trifle. There now, I broke my splinter-bar and went and cut a new one, and nobody said a word.'

Early in the morning, as soon as it was daybreak, Sergéy took an axe and went into the wood.

A cold white cover of dew, which was still falling untouched by the sun, lay on everything. The east was imperceptibly growing brighter, reflecting its pale light on the vault of heaven still veiled by a covering of clouds. Not a blade of grass below, nor a leaf on the topmost branches of the trees, stirred. Only occasionally a sound of wings amid the brushwood, or a rustling on the ground, broke the silence of the forest. Suddenly a strange sound, foreign to Nature, resounded and died away at the outskirts of the forest. Again the sound was heard, and was rhythmically repeated at the foot of the trunk of one of the motionless trees. A tree-top began to tremble in an unwonted manner, its juicy leaves whispered something, and the robin who had been sitting in one of its branches fluttered twice from place to place with a whistle, and jerking its tail sat down on another tree.

The axe at the bottom gave off a more and more muffled sound, sappy white chips were scattered on the dewy grass and a slight creaking was heard above the sound of the blows. The tree, shuddering in its whole body, bent down and quickly rose again, vibrating with fear on its roots. For an instant all was still, but the tree bent again, a crashing sound came from its trunk, and with its branches breaking and its boughs hanging down it fell with its crown on the damp earth.

The sounds of the axe and of the footsteps were silenced. The robin whistled and flitted higher. A twig which it brushed with its wings shook a little and then with all its foliage grew still like the rest. The trees flaunted the beauty of their motionless branches still more joyously in the newly cleared space.

The first sunbeams, piercing the translucent cloud, shone out and spread over earth and sky. The mist began to quiver like waves in the hollows, the dew sparkled and played on the verdure, the transparent cloudlets grew whiter, and hurriedly dispersed over the deepening azure vault of the sky. The birds stirred in the thicket and, as though bewildered, twittered joyfully about something; the sappy leaves whispered gladly and peacefully on the treetops, and the branches of those that were living began to rustle slowly and majestically over the dead and prostrate tree.

# **POLIKÚSHKA**





## POLIKÚSHKA

### I

'**I**T's for you to say, ma'am! Only it would be a pity if it's the Dútlovs. They're all good men and one of them must go if we don't send at least one of the house-serfs,' said the steward. 'As it is, everyone is hinting at them. . . . But it's just as you please, ma'am!'

And he placed his right hand over his left in front of him, inclined his head towards his right shoulder, drew in his thin lips almost with a smack, turned up his eyes, and said no more, evidently intending to keep silent for a long time and to listen without reply to all the nonsense his mistress was sure to utter.

The steward—clean-shaven and dressed in a long coat of a peculiar steward-like cut—who had come to report to his proprietress that autumn evening, was by birth a domestic serf.

The report from the lady's point of view meant listening to a statement of the business done on her estate and giving instructions for further business. From Egór Mikháylovich's (the steward's) point of view, 'reporting' was a ceremony of standing straight on both feet with out-turned toes in a corner facing the sofa, and listening to all sorts of irrelevant chatter, and by various ways and means getting the mistress into a state of mind in which she would quickly and impatiently say, 'All right, all right!' to all that Egór Mikháylovich proposed.

The business under consideration was the conscription. The Pokróvsk estate had to supply three recruits at the Feast of Pokróv.<sup>1</sup> Fate itself seemed to have selected two of them by a coincidence of

<sup>1</sup> The Intercession of the Virgin, the 1st of October old style.

domestic, moral, and economic circumstances. As far as they were concerned there could be no hesitation or dispute either on the part of the mistress, the Commune, or of public opinion. But who the third was to be was a debatable point. The steward was anxious to save the Dútlovs (in which family there were three men of military age), and to send Polikúshka, a married house-serf with a very bad reputation, who had been caught more than once stealing sacks, harness, and hay; but the mistress, who had often petted Polikúshka's ragged children and improved his morals by exhortations from the Bible, did not wish to give him up. At the same time she did not wish to injure the Dútlovs, whom she did not know and had never even seen. But for some reason she did not seem able to grasp the fact, and the steward could not make up his mind to tell her straight out, that if Polikúshka did not go one of the Dútlovs would have to. 'But I don't wish the Dútlovs any ill!' she said feelingly. 'If you don't—then pay three hundred rubles for a substitute,' should have been the steward's reply; but that would have been bad policy.

So Egór Mikháylovich took up a comfortable position, and even leaned imperceptibly against the door-post, while keeping a servile expression on his face and watching the movements of the lady's lips and the flutter of the frills of her cap and their shadow on the wall beneath a picture. But he did not consider it at all necessary to attend to the meaning of her words. The lady spoke long and said much. A desire to yawn gave him cramp behind his ears, but he adroitly turned the spasm into a cough, and holding his hand to his mouth gave a croak. Not long ago I saw Lord Palmerston sitting with his hat over his face while a member of the Opposition was storming at the Ministry, and

then suddenly rise and in a three hours' speech answer his opponent point by point. I saw it without surprise, because I had seen the same kind of thing going on between Egór Mikháylovich and his mistress a thousand times. At last—perhaps he was afraid of falling asleep or thought she was letting herself go too far—he changed the weight of his body from his left to his right foot and began, as he always did, with an unctuous preface:

'Just as you please to order, ma'am. . . . Only there is a gathering of the Commune now being held in front of my office window and we must come to some decision. The order says that the recruits are to be in town before the Feast of Pokróv. Among the peasants the Dútlovs are being suggested, and no one else. The *mir*<sup>1</sup> does not trouble about your interests. What does it care if we ruin the Dútlovs? I know what a hard time they've been having! Ever since I first had the stewardship they have been living in want. The old man's youngest nephew has scarcely had time to grow up to be a help, and now they're to be ruined again! And I, as you well know, am as careful of your property as of my own. . . . It's a pity, ma'am, whatever you're pleased to think! . . . After all they're neither kith nor kin to me, and I've had nothing from them. . . .'

'Why, Egór, as if I ever thought of such a thing!' interrupted the lady, and at once suspected him of having been bribed by the Dútlovs.

' . . . Only theirs is the best-kept homestead in the whole of Pokróvsk. They're God-fearing, hard-working peasants. The old man has been church Elder for thirty years; he doesn't drink or swear, and he goes to church' (the steward well knew with what to bait the hook). ' . . . But the chief thing that I would like to report to you is that he has only

<sup>1</sup> The Village Commune.

two sons—the others are nephews adopted out of charity—and so they ought to cast lots only with the two-men families. Many families have split up because of their own improvidence and their sons have separated from them, and so they are safe now—while these will have to suffer just because they have been charitable.’

Here the lady could not follow at all. She did not understand what he meant by ‘two-men families’ or ‘charitableness’. She only heard sounds and observed the nankeen buttons on the steward’s coat. The top one, which he probably did not button up so often, was firmly fixed on, the middle one was hanging loose and ought long ago to have been sewn on again. But it is a well-known fact that in a conversation, especially a business conversation, it is not at all necessary to understand what is being said, but only to remember what you yourself want to say. The lady acted accordingly.

‘How is it you won’t understand, Egór Mikháylovich?’ she said. ‘I have not the least desire that a Dútlov should go as a soldier. One would think that knowing me as you do you might credit me with the wish to do everything in my power to help my serfs, and that I don’t want any harm to come to them, and would sacrifice all I possess to escape from this sad necessity and to send neither Dútlov nor Polikúshka.’ (I don’t know whether it occurred to the steward that to escape the sad necessity there was no need to sacrifice everything—that, in fact, three hundred rubles would suffice; but this thought might well have crossed his mind.)

‘I will only tell you this: that I will not give up Polikúshka on any account. When he confessed to me of his own accord after that affair with the clock, and wept, and gave his word to amend, I talked to him for a long time and saw that he was

touched and sincerely penitent.' ('There! She's off now!' thought Egór Mikháylovich, and began to scrutinize the syrup she had in a glass of water: 'Is it orange or lemon? Slightly bitter, I expect,' thought he.) 'That is seven months ago now, and he has not once been tipsy, and has behaved splendidly. His wife tells me he is a different man. How can you wish me to punish him now that he has reformed? Besides it would be inhuman to make a soldier of a man who has five children, and only he to keep them. . . . No, you'd better not say any more about it, Egór!'

And the lady took a sip from her glass.

Egór Mikháylovich watched the motion of her throat as the liquid passed down it and then replied shortly and dryly:

'Then Dútlov's decided on?'

The lady clasped her hands together.

'How is it you don't understand? Do I wish Dútlov ill? Have I anything against him? God is my witness I am prepared to do anything for them. . . .' (She glanced at a picture in the corner, but remembered it was not an icon. 'Well, never mind . . . that's not to the point,' she thought. And again, strange to say, the idea of the three hundred rubles did not occur to her. . . .) 'Well, what can I do? What do I know about it? It's impossible for me to know. Well then, I rely on you—you know my wishes. . . . Act so as to satisfy everybody and according to the law. . . . What's to be done? They are not the only ones: everyone has times of trouble. Only Polikúshka can't be sent. You must understand that it would be dreadful of me to do such a thing. . . .'

She was roused and would have continued to speak for a long time had not one of her maid-servants entered the room at that moment.

'What is it, Dunyáša?'

'A peasant has come to ask Egór Mikháylovich if the meeting is to wait for him,' said Dunyáša, and glanced angrily at Egór Mikháylovich. ('Oh, that steward!' she thought; 'he's upset the mistress. Now she won't let me get a wink of sleep till two in the morning!')

'Well then, Egór, go and do the best you can.'

'Yes, ma'am.' He did not say anything more about Dútlov. 'And who is to go to the market-gardener to fetch the money?'

'Has not Peter returned from town?'

'No, ma'am.'

'Could not Nicholas go?'

'Father is down with backache,' remarked Dunyáša.

'Shall I go myself to-morrow, ma'am?' asked the steward.

'No, Egór, you are wanted here.' The lady pondered. 'How much is it?'

'Four hundred and sixty-two rubles.'

'Send Polikúshka,' said the lady, with a determined glance at Egór Mikháylovich's face.

Egór Mikháylovich stretched his lips into the semblance of a smile but without parting his teeth, and the expression on his face did not change.

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Send him to me.'

'Yes, ma'am;' and Egór Mikháylovich went to the counting-house.

## II

POLIKÉY (or Polikúshka, as he was usually contemptuously called), as a man of little importance, of tarnished reputation, and not a native of the village, had no influence either with the house-keeper, the butler, the steward, or the lady's-maid.

His *corner* was the very worst, though there were seven in his family. The late proprietor had had these *corners* built in the following manner: in the middle of a brick building, about twenty-three feet square, there was a large brick baking-oven surrounded by a passage, and the four corners of the building were separated from this 'colidor' (as the domestic serfs called it) by wooden partitions. So there was not much room in these *corners*, especially in Polikéy's, which was nearest to the door. The conjugal couch, with a print quilt and pillow-cases, a cradle with a baby in it, and a small three-legged table (on which the cooking and washing were done and all sorts of domestic articles placed, and at which Polikéy—who was a horse-doctor—worked), tubs, clothing, some chickens, a calf, and the seven members of the family, filled the whole *corner*—and could not have stirred in it had it not been for their quarter of the brick stove (on which both people and things could lie) and for the possibility of going out onto the steps. That, however, was hardly possible, for it is cold in October and the seven of them only possessed one sheepskin cloak between them; but on the other hand the children could keep warm by running about and the grown-ups by working, and both the one and the other could climb on the top of the stove where the temperature rose as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit. It may seem dreadful to live in such conditions, but they did not mind—it was quite possible to live. Akulína washed and sewed her husband's and her children's clothes, spun, wove, and bleached her linen, cooked and baked in the common oven, and quarrelled and gossiped with her neighbours. The monthly rations sufficed not only for the children, but for an addition to the cow's food. Firewood was free, and so was fodder for the cattle, and a little hay from the



stables sometimes came their way. They had a strip of kitchen garden. Their cow had calved, and they had their own fowls. Polikéy was employed in the stables to look after two stallions; he bled horses and cattle, cleaned their hoofs, lanced their sores, administered ointments of his own invention, and for this was paid in money and in kind. Also some of the proprietress's oats used to find their way into his possession, and for two measures of it a peasant in the village gave twenty pounds of mutton regularly every month. Life would have been quite bearable had there been no trouble at heart. But the family had a great trouble. Polikéy in his youth had lived at a stud-farm in another village. The groom into whose hands he happened to fall was the greatest thief in the whole district, and got exiled to Siberia. Under this man Polikéy served his apprenticeship, and in his youth became so used to 'these trifles' that in later life, though he would willingly have left off, he could not rid himself of the habit. He was a young man and weak; he had neither father nor mother nor anyone else to teach him. Polikéy liked drink, and did not like to see anything lying about loose. Whether it was a strap, a piece of harness, a padlock, a bolt, or a thing of greater value, Polikéy found some use for everything. There were people everywhere who would take these things and pay for them in drink or in money, by agreement. Such earnings, so people say, are the easiest to get: no apprenticeship is required, no labour or anything, and he who has once tried that kind of work does not care for any other. It has only one drawback: although you get things cheap and easily and live pleasantly, yet all of a sudden—through somebody's malice—things go all wrong, the trade fails, everything has to be accounted for at once, and you rue the day you were born.

And so it happened to Polikéy. Polikéy had married and God had given him good luck. His wife, the herdsman's daughter, turned out to be a healthy, intelligent, hard-working woman, who bore him one fine baby after another. And though Polikéy still stuck to his trade all went well till one fine day his luck forsook him and he was caught. And it was all about a trifle: he had hidden away some leather reins of a peasant's. They were found, he was beaten, the mistress was told of it, and he was watched. He was caught a second and a third time. People began to taunt him, the steward threatened to have him conscripted, the mistress gave him a scolding, and his wife wept and was broken-hearted. Everything went wrong. He was a good-natured man; not bad, but only weak. He was fond of drink and so in the habit of it that he could not leave it alone. Sometimes his wife would scold him and even beat him when he came home drunk, and he would weep, saying: 'Unfortunate man that I am, what shall I do? Blast my eyes, I'll give it up! Never again!' A month would go by, he would leave home, get drunk, and not be seen for a couple of days. And his neighbours would say: 'He must get the money somewhere to go on the spree with!' His latest trouble had been with the office clock. There was an old wall-clock there that had not been in working order for a long time. He happened to go in at the open door by himself and the clock tempted him. He took it and got rid of it in the town. As ill luck would have it the shopman to whom he sold the clock was related to one of the house-serfs, and coming to see her one holiday he spoke about the clock. People began making inquiries—especially the steward, who disliked Polikéy—just as if it was anybody else's concern! It was all found out and reported to the mistress, and she sent

for Polikéy. He fell at her feet at once and pathetically confessed everything, just as his wife had told him to do. He carried out her instructions very well. The mistress began admonishing him; she talked and talked and maundered on about God and virtue and the future life and about wife and children, and at last moved him to tears. Then she said:

‘I forgive you; only you must promise me never to do it again!’

‘Never in all my life. May I go to perdition! May my bowels gush out!’ said Polikéy, and wept touchingly.

Polikéy went home and for the rest of the day lay on the stove blubbing like a calf. Since then nothing more had been traced to him. But his life was no longer pleasant; he was looked on as a thief, and when the time of the conscription drew near everybody hinted at him.

As already mentioned, Polikéy was a horse-doctor. How he had suddenly become one nobody knew, himself least of all. At the stud-farm, when he worked under the head-keeper who got exiled, his only duties were to clean out the dung from the stables, sometimes to groom the horses, and to carry water. He could not have learned it there. Then he became a weaver; after that he worked in a garden, weeding the paths; then he was condemned to break bricks for some offence; then he took a place as yard-porter with a merchant, paying a yearly sum to his mistress for leave to do so. So evidently he could not have had any experience as a veterinary there either; yet somehow during his last stay at home his reputation as a wonderfully and even a rather supernaturally clever horse-doctor began gradually to spread. He bled a horse once or twice, then threw it down and prodded about in its thigh,

and then demanded that it should be placed in a trave, where he began cutting its frog till it bled, though the horse struggled and even whined, and he said this meant 'letting off the sub-hoof blood'! Then he explained to a peasant that it was absolutely necessary to let the blood from both veins, 'for greater ease,' and began to strike the dull lancet with a mallet; then he bandaged the innkeeper's horse under its belly with a selvedge torn from his wife's shawl, and finally he began to sprinkle all sorts of sores with vitriol, to drench them with something out of a bottle, and sometimes to give internally whatever came into his head. And the more horses he tormented and did to death, the more he was believed in and the more of them were brought to him.

I feel that for us educated people it is hardly the thing to laugh at Polikéy. The methods he employed to inspire confidence are the same that influenced our fathers, that influence us, and will influence our children. The peasant lying prone on the head of his only mare (which not only constitutes his whole wealth but is almost one of his family) and gazing with faith and horror at Polikéy's frowning look of importance and thin arms with upturned sleeves, as, with the healing rag or a bottle of vitriol between his teeth, he presses upon the very spot that is sore and boldly cuts into the living flesh (with the secret thought, 'The bow-legged brute will be sure to get over it!'), at the same time pretending to know where is blood and where pus, which is a tendon and which a vein—that peasant cannot conceive that Polikéy could lift his hand to cut without knowing where to do it. He himself could not do so. And once the thing is done he will not reproach himself with having given permission to cut unnecessarily. I don't know how you feel

about it, but I have gone through the same experience with a doctor who, at my request, was tormenting those dear to me. The lancet, the whitish bottle of sublimate, and the words, 'the staggers—glanders—to let blood, or matter,' and so on, do they not come to the same thing as 'neurosis, rheumatism, organisms,' and so forth? *Wage du zu irren und zu träumen*<sup>1</sup> refers not so much to poets as to doctors and veterinary surgeons.

### III

ON the evening when the village meeting, in the cold darkness of an October night, was choosing the recruits and vociferating in front of the office, Polikéy sat on the edge of his bed pounding some horse medicine on the table with a bottle—but what it was he himself did not know. He had there corrosive sublimate, sulphur, Glauber's salts, and some kind of herb which he had gathered, having suddenly imagined it to be good for broken wind and then considered it not amiss for other disorders. The children were already lying down—two on the stove, two on the bed, and one in the cradle beside which Akulína sat spinning. The candle-end—one of the proprietress's candles which had not been put away carefully enough—was burning in a wooden candlestick on the window-sill and Akulína every now and then got up to snuff it with her fingers, so that her husband should not have to break off his important occupation. There were some free-thinkers who regarded Polikéy as a worthless veterinary and a worthless man. Others, the majority, considered him a worthless man but a great master of his art; but Akulína, though she often scolded and even beat her husband, thought

<sup>1</sup> 'Dare to err and dream.'

him undoubtedly the first of horse-doctors and the best of men. Polikéy sprinkled some kind of simple on the palm of his hand (he never used scales, and spoke ironically of the Germans who use them: 'This,' he used to say, 'is not an apothecary's!'). Polikéy weighed the simple on his hand and tossed it up, but there did not seem enough of it and he poured in ten times more. 'I'll put in the lot,' he said to himself. 'It will pick 'em up better.' Akulína quickly turned round at the sound of her lord and master's voice, expecting some command; but seeing that the business did not concern her she shrugged her shoulders. 'What knowledge! . . . Where does he get it?' she thought, and went on spinning. The paper which had held the simple fell to the floor. Akulína did not overlook this.

'Annie,' she cried, 'look! Father has dropped something. Pick it up!'

Annie put out her thin little bare legs from under the cloak with which she was covered, slid down under the table like a kitten, and got the paper.

'Here, daddy,' she said, and darted back into bed with her chilled little feet.

'Don't puth!' squeaked her lisping younger sister sleepily.

'I'll give it you!' muttered Akulína, and both heads disappeared again under the cloak.

'He'll give me three rubles,' said Polikéy, corking up the bottle. 'I'll cure the horse. It's even too cheap,' he added, 'brain-splitting work! . . . Akulína, go and ask Nikíta for a little 'baccy. I'll pay him back to-morrow.'

Polikéy took out of his trouser-pocket a lime-wood pipe-stem, which had once been painted, with a sealing-wax mouthpiece, and began fixing it onto the bowl.

Akulína left her spindle and went out, managing

to steer clear of everything—though this was not easy. Polikéy opened the cupboard and put away the medicine, then tilted a vodka bottle into his mouth, but it was empty and he made a grimace. But when his wife brought the tobacco he sat down on the edge of the bed, after filling and lighting his pipe, and his face beamed with the content and pride of a man who has completed his day's task. Whether he was thinking how on the morrow he would catch hold of the horse's tongue and pour his wonderful mixture down its throat, or reflecting that a useful person never gets a refusal—"There, now! Hadn't Nikíta sent him the tobacco?"—anyhow he felt happy. Suddenly the door, which hung on one hinge, was thrown open and a maidservant from *up there*—not the second maid but the third, the little one that was kept to run errands—entered their *corner*. (*Up there*, as every one knows, means the master's house, even if it stands on lower ground.) Aksyútka—that was the girl's name—always flew like a bullet, and did it without bending her arms, which keeping time with the speed of her flight swung like pendulums, not at her sides but in front of her. Her cheeks were always redder than her pink dress, and her tongue moved as fast as her legs. She flew into the room, and for some reason catching hold of the stove, began to sway to and fro; then as if intent on not emitting more than two or three words at once, she suddenly addressed Akulína breathlessly as follows:

"The mistress . . . has given orders . . . that Polikéy should come this minute . . . orders to come up. . . ."

She stopped, drawing breath with difficulty.

"Egór Mikháylovich has been with the mistress . . . they talked about *rickruits* . . . they mentioned Polikéy . . . Avdótya Nikoláevna . . . has ordered him to come this minute . . . Avdótya Nikoláevna

has ordered . . .’ again a sigh, ‘to come this minute. . . .’

For half a minute Aksyútka looked round at Polikéy and at Akulína and the children—who had put out their heads from under their coverlets—picked up a nutshell that lay on the stove and threw it at little Annie. Then she repeated: ‘To come this minute! . . .’ and rushed out of the room like a whirlwind, the pendulums swinging as usual across her line of flight.

Akulína again rose and got her husband his boots—abominable soldier’s boots with holes in them—and took down his coat from the stove and handed it to him without looking at him.

‘Won’t you change your shirt, Polikéy?’

‘No,’ he answered.

Akulína never once looked at his face while he put on his boots and coat, and she did well not to look. Polikéy’s face was pale, his nether jaw twitched, and in his eyes there was that tearful, meek, and deeply mournful look one only sees in the eyes of kindly, weak, and guilty people.—He combed his hair and was going out; but his wife stopped him, tucked in the string of his shirt that hung down from under his coat, and put his cap on for him.

‘What’s that, Polikéy? Has the mistress sent for you?’ came the voice of the carpenter’s wife from behind the partition.

Only that very morning the carpenter’s wife had had high words with Akulína about her pot of lye<sup>1</sup> that Polikéy’s children had upset in her *corner*, and at first she was pleased to hear Polikéy being summoned to the mistress—most likely for no good. She was a subtle, diplomatic lady, with a biting

<sup>1</sup> Made by scalding wood-ash taken from the stove, and used for washing clothes.



tongue. Nobody knew better than she how to cut one with a word: so at least she imagined.

'I expect you'll be sent to town to buy things,' she continued. 'I suppose a trusty person is wanted for that job so she is sending you! You might buy me a quarter of a pound of tea there, Polikéy.'

Akulína forced back her tears, and an angry expression distorted her lips. She felt as if she could have clutched 'that vixen, the joiner's wife, by her mangy hair.' But as she looked at her children and thought that they would be left fatherless and she herself be a soldier's wife and as good as widowed, she forgot the sharp-tongued carpenter's wife, hid her face in her hands, sat down on the bed, and let her head sink in the pillows.

'Mammy, you're cwushing me!' lisped the little girl, pulling the cloak with which she was covered from under her mother's elbow.

'If only you'd die, all of you! I've brought you into the world for nothing but sorrow!' cried Akulína, and sobbed aloud, to the delight of the carpenter's wife who had not yet forgotten the lye spilt that morning.

#### IV

HALF an hour passed. The baby began to cry. Akulína got up and gave it the breast. Weeping no longer, but resting her thin though still handsome face on her hand and fixing her eyes on the last flickerings of the candle, she sat thinking why she had married, wondering why so many soldiers were needed, and also how she could pay out the carpenter's wife.

She heard her husband's footsteps and, wiping her tears, got up to let him pass. Polikéy entered like a conqueror, threw his cap on the bed, puffed, and undid his girdle.

"Well, what did she want you for?"

"H'm! Of course! Polikúshka is the least of men . . . but when there's business to be done, who's wanted? Why, Polikúshka. . . ."

"What business?"

Polikéy was in no hurry to reply. He lit his pipe and spat.

"To go and fetch money from a merchant."

"To fetch money?" Akulína asked.

Polikéy chuckled and wagged his head.

"Ah! Ain't she clever at words? . . . "You have been regarded," she says, "as an untrustworthy man, but I trust you more than another" ' (Polikéy spoke loud that the neighbours might hear). "You promised me you'd reform; here", she says, "is the first proof that I believe you. Go", she says, "to the merchant, fetch the money he owes, and bring it back to me." And I say: "We are all your serfs, ma'am," I say, "and must serve you as we serve God; so I feel that I can do anything for your honour and cannot refuse any kind of work; whatever you order I will do, because I am your slave." ' (He again smiled that peculiar, weak, kindly, guilty smile.) "Well, then," she says, "you will do it faithfully? . . . You understand," she says, "that your fate depends on it?"—"How could I fail to understand that I can do it all? If they have told tales about me—well, anyone can tell tales about another . . . but I never in any way, I believe, have even had a thought against your honour . . ." In a word, I buttered her up till my lady was quite softened. . . . "I shall think highly of you," she says.' (He kept silent a minute, then the smile again appeared on his face.) 'I know very well how to talk to the likes of them! Formerly, when I used to go out to work on my own, at times some one would come down hard on me; but only let me get in a

word or two and I'd butter him up till he'd be as smooth as silk!

'Is it much money?'

'Fifteen hundred rubles,' carelessly replied Polikéy.

She shook her head.

'When are you to go?'

'“To-morrow,” she says. “Take any horse you like,” she says, “call at the office, and then start and God be with you!”’

'The Lord be praised!' said Akulína, rising and crossing herself. 'May God help you, Polikéy,' she added in a whisper, so that she might not be heard beyond the partition and holding him by his shirt-sleeve. 'Polikéy, listen to me! I beseech you in the name of Christ our God: kiss the cross when you start, and promise that not a drop shall pass your lips.'

'A likely thing!' he ejaculated; 'drink when carrying all that money! . . . Ah! how somebody was playing the piano up there! Fine! . . . ' he said, after a pause, and smiled. 'I suppose it was the young lady. I was standing like this in front of the mistress, beside the whatnot, and the young lady was rattling away behind the door. She rattled and rattled on, fitting it together so pat! O my! Wouldn't I like to play a tune! I'd soon master it, I would. I'm awfully good at that sort of thing. . . . Let me have a clean shirt to-morrow!'

And they went to bed happy.

## V

MEANWHILE the meeting in front of the office had been noisy. The business before them was no trifle. Almost all the peasants were present. While the steward was with the mistress they kept their caps

on, more voices were heard, and they talked more loudly. The hum of deep voices, interrupted at rare intervals by breathless, husky, and shrill tones, filled the air and, entering through the windows of the mistress's house, sounded like the noise of a distant sea, making her feel a nervous agitation like that produced by a heavy thunderstorm—a sensation between fear and discomfort. She felt as if the voices might at any moment grow yet louder and faster and then something would happen. 'As if it could not all be done quietly, peaceably, without disputing and shouting,' she thought, 'according to the Christian law of brotherly love and meekness!'

Many voices were speaking at once, but Theodore Rezún, the carpenter, shouted loudest. There were two grown-up young men in his family and he was attacking the Dútlovs. Old Dútlov was defending himself: he stepped forward from the crowd behind which he had at first been standing. Now spreading out his arms, now clutching his little beard, he sputtered and snuffled in such a way that it would have been hard for him to understand what he himself was saying. His sons and nephews—splendid fellows all of them—stood huddled behind him, and the old man resembled the mother-hen in the game of Hawk and Chickens. The hawk was Rezún; and not only Rezún, but all the men who had two grown lads in family, and the fathers of only sons, and almost the whole meeting, were attacking Dútlov. The point was that Dútlov's brother had been recruited thirty years before, and that Dútlov wished therefore to be excused from taking his turn with the families in which there were three eligible young men, and wanted his brother's service in the army to be reckoned to the credit of his family, so that it should be given the same chance as those in which there were only two young men; and that these

families should all draw lots equally and the third recruit be chosen from among all of them. Besides Dútlov's family there were four others in which there were three young men, but one was the village Elder's family and the mistress had exempted him. From the second a recruit had been taken the year before, and from each of the remaining families a recruit was now being taken. One of them had not even come to this meeting, but his wife stood sorrowfully behind all the others, vaguely hoping that the wheel of fortune might somehow turn her way. The red-haired Román, the father of the other recruit, in a tattered coat—though he was not poor—hung his head and silently leaned against the porch, only now and then looking up attentively at any one who raised his voice, and then hanging his head again. Misery seemed to breathe from his whole figure. Old Semen Dútlov was a man to whose keeping anyone who knew anything of him would have trusted hundreds and thousands of rubles. He was a steady, God-fearing, reliable man, and was the church Elder. Therefore the excitement he was now in was all the more striking.

Rezún the carpenter, a tall dark man, was, on the contrary, a riotous drunkard, very smart in a dispute and in arguing with workmen, tradespeople, peasants, or gentlefolk, at meetings and fairs. Now he was self-possessed and sarcastic, and from his superior height was crushing down the spluttering church Elder with the whole strength of his ringing voice and oratorical talent. The church Elder was exasperated out of his usual sober groove. Besides these, the youngish, round-faced, square-headed, curly-bearded, thick-set Garáska Kopylov, one of the speakers of the younger generation, followed Rezún and took part in the dispute. He had already gained some weight at village meetings,

having distinguished himself by his trenchant speeches. Then there was Theodore Mélnichny, a tall, thin, yellow-faced, round-shouldered man, also young, with a scanty beard and small eyes, always embittered and gloomy, seeing the dark side of everything and often bewildering the meeting by unexpected and abrupt questions and remarks. Both these speakers sided with Rezún. Besides these there were two babblers who now and then joined in: one, called Khrapkóv, with a most good-humoured face and flowing brown beard, who kept repeating the words, 'Oh, my dearest friend!' the other, Zhidkóv, a little fellow with a bird-like face who also kept remarking at every opportunity, 'That's how it is, brothers mine!' addressing himself to everybody and speaking fluently but never to the point. Both of these sided first with one and then with the other party, but no one listened to them. There were others like them, but these two, who kept moving through the crowd and shouting louder than anybody and frightening the mistress, were listened to less than anyone else. Intoxicated by the noise and shouting, they gave themselves up entirely to the pleasure of letting their tongues wag. There were many other characters among the members of the commune, stern, respectable, indifferent, or depressed; and there were women standing behind the men with sticks in their hands, but, God willing, I'll speak of them some other time. The greater part of the crowd, however, consisted of peasants who stood as if they were in church, whispering behind each other's backs about home affairs, or of when to cut faggots in the wood, or silently awaiting the end of the jabber. There were also rich peasants whose well-being the meeting could not add to nor diminish. Such was Ermíl, with his broad shiny face, whom the peasants

called the 'big-bellied', because he was rich. Such too was Stárostin, whose face showed a self-satisfied expression of power that seemed to say, 'You may talk away, but no one will touch me! I have four sons, but not one of them will have to go.' Now and then these two were attacked by some independent thinker such as Kopylov and Rezún, but they replied quietly and firmly and with a consciousness of their own inviolability. If Dútlov was like the mother-hen in the game of Hawk and Chickens, his lads did not much resemble the chickens. They did not flutter about and squeak, but stood quietly behind him. His eldest son, Ignát, was already thirty; the second, Vasli, also was already a married man and moreover not fit for a recruit; the third, his nephew Elijah, who had just got married—a fair, rosy young man in a smart sheepskin coat (he was a post-chaise driver)—stood looking at the crowd, sometimes scratching his head under his hat, as if the whole matter was no concern of his, though it was just on him that the hawks wished to swoop down.

'If it comes to that, my grandfather was a soldier,' said one, 'and so I might refuse to draw lots in just the same way! . . . There's no such law, friend. Last recruiting, Mikhéchev was taken though his uncle had not even returned from service then.'

'Neither your father nor your uncle ever served the Tsar,' Dútlov was saying at the same time. 'Why, you don't even serve the mistress or the commune, but spend all your time in the pub. Your sons have separated from you because it's impossible to live with you, so you go suggesting other people's sons for recruits! But I have done police duty for ten years, and served as Elder. Twice I have been burnt out, and no one helped me over it; and now, because things are peaceable and decent in my

come, am I to be ruined? . . . Give me back my brother, then! He has died in service for sure. . . . Judge honestly according to God's law, Christian commune, and don't listen to a drunkard's drivel.'

And at the same time Geráska was saying to Dútlov:

'You are making your brother an excuse; but he was not sent by the commune. He was sent by the master because of his evil ways, so he's no excuse for you.'

Geráska had not finished when the lank yellow-faced Theodore Méluichny stepped forward and began dismally:

'Yes, that's the way! The masters send whom they please, and then the commune has to get the muddle straight. The commune has fixed on your lad, and if you don't like it, go and ask the lady. Perhaps she will order me, the one man of our family, to leave my children and go! . . . There's law for you!' he said bitterly, and waving his hand he went back to his former place.

Red-haired Román, whose son had been chosen as a recruit, raised his head and muttered: 'That's it, that's it! and even sat down on the step in vexation.

But these were not the only ones who were speaking at once. Besides those at the back who were talking about their own affairs, the babblers did not forget to do their part.

'And so it is, faithful commune,' said little Zhidkón, supporting Dútlov. 'One must judge in a Christian way. . . . Like Christians I mean, brothers, we must judge.'

'One must judge according to one's conscience, my dear friend,' spoke the good-humoured Khrapkón, repeating Garáska Kopylov's words and pulling Dútlov by his sheepskin coat. 'It was the master's will and not the commune's decision.'



'That's right! So it was!' said others.

'What drunkard is drivelling there?' Rezún retorted to Dútlov. 'Did you stand me any drinks? Or is your son, whom they pick up by the roadside, going to reproach me for drinking? . . . Friends, we must decide! If you want to spare the Dútlavs, choose not only out of families with two men, but even an only son, and he will have the laugh of us!'

'A Dútlov will have to go! What's the good of talking?'

'Of course the three-men families must be the first to draw lots,' began different voices.

'We must first see what the mistress will say. Egór Mikháylovich was saying that they wished to send a house-serf,' put in a voice.

This remark checked the dispute for a while, but soon it flared up anew and again came to personalities.

Ignát, whom Rezún had accused of being picked up drunk by the roadside, began to make out that Rezún had stolen a saw from some travelling carpenters, and that he had almost beaten his wife to death when he was drunk.

Rezún replied that he beat his wife drunk or sober, and still it was not enough, and this set everybody laughing. But about the saw he became suddenly indignant, stepped closer to Ignát and asked:

'Who stole? . . .'

'You did,' replied the sturdy Ignát, drawing still closer.

'Who stole? . . . Wasn't it you?' shouted Rezún.

'No, it was you,' said Ignát.

From the saw they went on to the theft of a horse, a sack of oats, some strip of communal kitchen-garden, and to a certain dead body; and the two peasants said such terrible things of one another

that if a hundredth part of them had been true they would by law at the very least have deserved exile to Siberia.

In the meantime old Dútlov had chosen another way of defending himself. He did not like his son's shouting, and tried to stop him, saying: 'It's a sin. . . . Leave off, I tell you!' At the same time he argued that not only those who had three young men at home were three-men families, but also those whose sons had separated from them, and he also pointed to Stárostin.

Stárostin smiled slightly, cleared his throat, and stroking his beard with the air of a well-to-do peasant, answered that it all depended on the mistress, and that evidently his sons had deserved well, since the order was for them to be exempt.

Garáska smashed Dútlov's arguments about the families that had broken up, by the remark that they ought not to have been allowed to break up, as was the rule during the lifetime of the late master; but that no one went raspberry-picking when summer was over, and that one could not now conscript the only man left in a household.

'Did they break up their households for fun? Why should they now be quite ruined?' came the voices of the men whose families had separated; and the babblers joined in too.

'You'd better buy a substitute if you're not satisfied. You can afford it!' said Rezún to Dútlov.

Dútlov wrapped his coat round him with a despairing gesture and stepped back behind the others.

'It seems you've counted my money!' he muttered angrily. 'We shall see what Egór Mikháylovich will say when he comes from the mistress.'

## VI

At that very moment Egór Mikháylovich came out of the house. One cap after another was lifted, and as the steward approached all the heads—grey, grizzled, red, brown, fair, or bald in front or on top—were uncovered, and the voices were gradually silenced till at last all was quiet. Egór Mikháylovich stepped onto the porch, evidently intending to speak. In his long coat, his hands awkwardly thrust into the front pockets, his town-made cap pulled over his forehead, he stood firmly, with feet apart, in this elevated position, towering above all these heads—mostly old, bearded, and handsome—that were turned towards him. He was now a different man from what he had been when he stood before his mistress. He was majestic.

'This is the mistress's decision, men! It is not her pleasure to give up any of the house-serfs, but from among you—whom you yourselves decide on shall go. Three are wanted this time. By rights only two and a half are wanted, but the half will be taken into account next time. It comes to the same thing: if not to-day it would have to be to-morrow.'

'Of course, that's quite right!' some voices said.

'In my opinion,' continued Egór Mikháylovich, 'Kharyúshkin and Váska Mityúkhin must go, that is evidently God's will.'

'Yes, that's quite right!' said the voices.

'... The third will have to be one of the Dútlovs, or one out of a two-men family. . . . What do you say?'

'Dútlov!' cried the voices. 'There are three of them of the right age!'

And again, little by little, the shouting increased, and somehow the question of the strip of kitchen-garden and certain sacks stolen from the mistress's

yard came up again. Egór Mikháylovich had been managing the estate for the last twenty years and was a shrewd and experienced man. He stood and listened for about a quarter of an hour, then he ordered all to be silent, and the three younger Dútlovs to draw lots to see which of them was to go. The lots were prepared, shaken up in a hat, and Khrapkón drew one out. It was Elijah's. All became silent.

'Is it mine? Let me see it!' said Elijah in a faltering voice.

All remained silent. Egór Mikháylovich ordered that everybody should bring the recruit money—seven kopeks from each household—next day, and saying that all was over, dismissed the meeting. The crowd moved off, the men covered their heads as they turned the corner, and their voices and the sound of their footsteps mingled into a hum. The steward stood on the porch watching the departing crowd, and when the young Dútlovs were round the corner he beckoned old Dútlov, who had stopped of his own accord, and they went into the office.

'I am sorry for you, old man,' said Egór Mikháylovich, sitting down in an arm-chair before the table. 'It was your turn though. Will you buy a recruit to take your nephew's place, or not?'

The old man, without speaking, gave Egór Mikháylovich a significant look.

'There's no getting out of it,' said Egór Mikháylovich in answer to that look.

'We'd be glad enough to buy a substitute, Egór Mikháylovich, but we haven't the means. Two horses went to the knacker's this summer, and there was my nephew's wedding. . . . Evidently it's our fate . . . for living honestly. It's very well for him to talk!' (He was thinking of Rezún.)

Egór Mikháylovich rubbed his face with his

hand and yawned. He was evidently tired of the business and was ready for his tea.

'Eh, old fellow, don't be mean!' said he. 'Have a hunt under your floor, I dare say you'll turn up some four hundred old ruble notes, and I'll get you a substitute—a regular wonder! . . . The other day a fellow came offering himself.'

'In the *government*?' asked Dútlov, meaning the town.

'Well, will you buy him?'

'I'd be glad enough, God is my witness! . . . but . . .'

Egór Mikháylovich interrupted him sternly.

'Well then, listen to me, old man! See that Elijah does himself no mischief,<sup>1</sup> and as soon as I send word—whether to-day or to-morrow—he is to be taken to town at once. You will take him and you will be answerable for him, but if anything should happen to him—which God forbid!—I'll send your eldest son instead! Do you hear?'

'But could not one be sent from a two-man family? . . . Egór Mikháylovich, this is not fair!' he said. Then after a pause he went on, almost with tears: 'When my brother has died a soldier, now they are taking my son! How have I deserved such a blow?' and he was ready to fall on his knees.

'Well, well, go away!' said Egór Mikháylovich. 'Nothing can be done. It's the law. Keep an eye on Elijah: you'll have to answer for him!'

Dútlov went home, thoughtfully tapping the ruts with his linden stick as he walked.

## VII

EARLY next morning a big-boned bay gelding (for some reason called Drum) harnessed to a small cart

<sup>1</sup> It sometimes happened that to escape service men mutilated themselves, for instance by cutting off the finger needed to pull the trigger.

he steward himself used to drive in that cart), stood at the porch of the house-serfs' quarters. Annie, Polikéy's eldest daughter, barefoot in spite of the falling sleet and the cold wind, and evidently frightened, stood at the horse's head holding the bridle at arm's length, and with her other hand held a faded yellowy-green jacket that was thrown over her head, and which served the family as blanket, cloak, hood, carpet, overcoat for Polikéy, and many other things besides. Polikéy's *corner* was all in a bustle. The dim light of a rainy morning was just glimmering in at the window, which was broken here and there and mended with paper. Akulína had left her cooking in the oven, and left her children—of whom the younger were still in bed—shivering, because the jacket that served them as blanket had been taken away to serve as a garment and only replaced by the shawl off their mother's head. Akulína was busy getting her husband ready for his journey. His shirt was clean, but his boots, which as the saying is were 'begging for porridge', gave her much trouble. She had taken off her thick worsted stockings (her only pair) and given them to her husband, and had managed to cut out a pair of inner soles from a saddle-cloth (which had been carelessly left about in the stable and had been brought home by Polikéy two days before) in such a way as to stop up the holes in his boots and keep his feet dry. Polikéy sat, feet and all, on the bed, untwisting his girdle so that it should not look like a dirty cord. The cross, lispig little girl, wrapped in the sheepskin (which though it covered her head was trailing round her feet), had been dispatched to ask Nikíta to lend them a cap. The bustle was increased by house-serfs coming in to ask Polikéy to get different things for them in town. One wanted needles, another tea, a third some tobacco, and

another some olive oil. The carpenter's wife—who to conciliate Polikéy had already found time to make her samovar boil and bring him a mug full of liquid which she called tea—wanted some sugar. Though Nikíta refused to lend a cap and they had to mend his own—that is, to push in the protruding bits of wadding and sew them up with a veterinary needle; though at first the boots with the saddle-cloth soles would not go on his feet; though Annie, chilled through, nearly let Drum get out of hand, and Mary in the long sheepskin had to take her place, and then Mary had to take off the sheepskin and Akulína had to hold the horse herself—it all ended by Polikéy successfully getting all the warm family garments on himself, leaving only the jacket and a pair of slippers behind. When ready, he got into the little cart, wrapped the sheepskin round him, shook up the bag of hay at the bottom of the cart, again wrapped himself up, took the reins, wrapped the coat still closer round him as very important people do, and started.

His little boy Míshka, running out onto the steps, begged to have a ride; the lisping Mary also begged that she might 'have a lide', and was 'not cold even without the theepthkin'; so Polikéy stopped Drum and smiled his weak smile while Akulína put the children into the cart and, bending towards him, begged him in a whisper to remember his oath and not drink anything on the way. Polikéy took the children through the village as far as the smithy, put them down, wrapped himself up and put his cap straight again, and drove off at a slow, sedate trot, his cheeks quivering at every jolt and his feet knocking against the bark sides of the cart. Mary and Míshka, barefoot, rushed down the slippery hill to the house at such a rate and yelling so loudly that a stray dog from the village looked up at them and

hurried home with its tail between its legs, which made Polikéy's heirs yell ten times louder.

It was abominable weather: the wind was cutting, and something between rain and snow, and now and then fine hail, beat on Polikéy's face and on his bare hands which held the reins—and over which he kept drawing the sleeves of his coat—and on the leather of the horse-collar, and on the head of old Drum, who set back his ears and half closed his eyes.

Then suddenly the rain stopped and it brightened up in a moment. The bluish snowclouds stood out clear and the sun began to come out, but uncertainly and cheerlessly like Polikéy's own smile. Notwithstanding all this, Polikéy was deep in pleasant thoughts. He whom they threatened to exile and conscript, whom only those who were too lazy did not scold and beat, who was always shoved into the worst places, *he* was driving now to fetch *a sum of money*, and a large sum too, and his mistress trusted him, and he was driving in the steward's cart behind Drum—with whom the lady herself sometimes drove out—just as if he were some proprietor with leather collar-strap and reins instead of ropes. And Polikéy sat up straighter, pushed in the bits of wadding hanging out of his cap, and again wrapped his coat closer.

If Polikéy, however, imagined that he looked just like a wealthy peasant proprietor he deluded himself. It is true, as every one knows, that tradesmen worth ten thousand rubles drive in carts with leather harness, only this was not quite the same thing. A bearded man in a blue or black coat drives past sitting alone in a cart, driving a well-fed horse, and you just glance to see if the horse is sleek and he himself well fed, and at the way he sits, at the horse's harness, and the tyres on the cartwheels, and at his girdle, and you know at once whether the man does



business in hundreds or in thousands of rubles. Every experienced person looking closer at Polikéy, at his hands, his face, his newly-grown beard, his girdle, at the hay carelessly thrown into the cart, at lean Drum, at the worn tyres, would know at once that it was only a serf driving past, and not a merchant or a cattle-dealer or even a peasant proprietor, and that he did not deal in thousands or hundreds, or even tens of rubles. But Polikéy did not think so: he deceived himself, and deceived himself agreeably. He is going to carry home fifteen hundred rubles in the bosom of his coat. If he liked, he might turn Drum's head towards Odessa instead of homewards, and drive off where Fate might take him. But he will not do such a thing; he will bring the lady her money all in order, and will talk about having had larger sums than that on him. When they came to an inn Drum began pulling at the left rein, turning towards the inn and stopping; but Polikéy, though he had the money given him to do the shopping with, gave Drum the whip and drove on. The same thing happened at the next inn, and about noon he got out of the cart, and opening the gate of the inn-keeper's house where all his mistress's people put up, he led the horse and cart into the yard. There he unharnessed, gave the horse some hay, dined with the inn-keeper's men, not omitting to mention what important business he had come on, and then went out with the market-gardener's bill in the crown of his cap.

The market-gardener (who knew and evidently mistrusted Polikéy) having read the letter questioned him as to whether he had really been sent for the money. Polikéy tried to seem offended, but could not manage it, and only smiled his peculiar smile. The market-gardener read the letter over once more and handed him the money. Having

received the money, Polikéy put it into his bosom and went back to the inn. Neither the beershop nor the tavern nor anything tempted him. He felt a pleasant agitation through his whole being, and stopped more than once in front of shops that showed tempting wares: boots, coats, caps, chintz, and foodstuffs, and went on with the pleasant feeling: 'I could buy it all, but there now, I won't do it!' He went to the bazaar for the things he had been asked to buy, got them all, and started bargaining for a lined sheepskin coat, for which he was asked twenty-five rubles. For some reason the dealer, after looking at Polikéy, seemed to doubt his ability to buy it. But Polikéy pointed to his bosom, saying that he could buy the whole shop if he liked, and insisted on trying the coat on; felt it, patted it, blew into the wool till he became permeated with the smell of it, and then took it off with a sigh. 'The price does not suit me. If you'll let it go for fifteen rubles, now!' he said. The dealer angrily threw the coat across the table, and Polikéy went out and cheerfully returned to his inn. After supper, having watered Drum and given him some oats, he climbed up on the stove, took out the envelope with the money and examined it for a long time, and then asked a porter who knew how to read to read him the address and the inscription: 'With enclosure of one thousand six hundred and seventeen assignation rubles.'<sup>1</sup> The envelope was made of common paper and sealed with brown sealing-wax with the impression of an anchor. There was one large seal in the middle, four at the corners, and there were some drops of sealing-wax near the edge. Polikéy examined all this, and studied it. He even felt the sharp edges of the notes. It gave him a kind of

<sup>1</sup> Equal to 462 'silver rubles', at 3½ assignations for one silver ruble.

childish pleasure to know that he had such a sum in his hands. He thrust the envelope into a hole in the lining of his cap, and lay down with the cap under his head; but even in the night he kept waking and feeling the envelope. And each time he found it in its place he experienced the pleasant feeling that here was he, the disgraced, the down-trodden Polikéy, carrying such a sum and delivering it up more accurately than even the steward could have done.

## VIII

ABOUT midnight the innkeeper's men and Polikéy were awakened by a knocking at the gate and the shouting of peasants. It was the party of recruits from Pokróvsk. There were about ten people: Khoryúshkin, Mityúkin, and Elijah (Dútlov's nephew), two substitutes in case of need, the village Elder, old Dútlov, and the men who had driven them. A night-light was burning in the room, and the cook was sleeping on a bench under the icons. She jumped up and began lighting a candle. Polikéy also awoke, and leaning over from the top of the stove looked at the peasants as they came in. They came in crossing themselves, and sat down on the benches round the room. They all seemed perfectly calm, so that one could not tell which of them were the conscripts and which their escorts. They were greeting the people of the inn, talking loudly, and asking for food. It is true that some were silent and sad; but on the other hand others were unusually merry, evidently drunk. Among these was Elijah, who had never had too much to drink before.

'Well, lads, shall we go to sleep or have some supper?' asked the Elder.

'Supper!' said Elijah, throwing open his coat and setting himself on a bench. 'Send for some vodka.'

'Enough of your vodka!' answered the Elder shortly, and turning to the others he said: 'You just cut yourselves a bit of bread, lads! Why wake people up?'

'Give me vodka!' Elijah repeated, without looking at anybody, and in a voice that showed that he would not soon stop.

The peasants took the Elder's advice, fetched some bread out of their carts, ate it, asked for a little kvas, and lay down, some on the floor and some on the stove.

Elijah kept repeating at intervals: 'Let me have some vodka, I say, let me have some.' Then, noticing Polikéy: 'Polikéy! Hi, Polikéy! You here, dear friend? Why, I am going for a soldier. . . . Have said good-bye to my mother and my missus. . . . How she howled! They've bundled me off for a soldier. . . . Stand me some vodka!'

'I haven't got any money,' answered Polikéy, and to comfort him added: 'Who knows? By God's aid you may be rejected! . . .'

'No, friend. I'm as sound as a young birch. I've never had an illness. There's no rejecting for me! What better soldier can the Tsar want?'

Polikéy began telling him how a peasant gave a doctor a five-ruble note and got rejected.

Elijah drew nearer the oven, and they talked more freely.

'No, Polikéy, it's all up now! I don't want to stay now myself. Uncle has done for me. As if he couldn't have bought a substitute! . . . No, he grudged his son, and grudges the money, so they send me. No! I don't myself want to stay.' (He spoke gently, confidingly, under the influence of quiet sorrow.) 'One thing only—I am sorry for

mother, dear heart! . . . How she grieved! And the wife, too! . . . They've ruined the woman just for nothing; now she'll perish—in a word, she'll be a soldier's wife! Better not to have married. What did they marry me for? . . . They're coming here to-morrow.'

'But why have they brought you so soon?' asked Polikéy; 'nothing was heard about it, and then, all of a sudden . . .'

'Why, they're afraid I shall do myself some mischief,' answered Elijah, smiling. 'No fear! I'll do nothing of the kind. I shall not be lost even as a soldier; only I'm sorry for mother. . . . Why did they get me married?' he said gently and sadly.

The door opened and shut with a loud slam as old Dútlov came in, shaking the wet off his cap, and as usual in bast-shoes so big that they looked like boats.

'Afanásy,' he said to the porter, when he had crossed himself, 'isn't there a lantern to get some oats by?'

And without looking at Elijah he began slowly lighting a bit of candle. His mittens and whip were stuck into the girdle tied neatly round his coat, and his toil-worn face appeared as usual, simple, quiet, and full of business cares, as if he had just arrived with a train of loaded carts.

Elijah became silent when he saw his uncle, and looked dismally down at the bench again. Then, addressing the Elder, he muttered:

'Vodka, Ermíl! I want some drink!' His voice sounded wrathful and dejected.

'Drink, at this time?' answered the Elder, who was eating something out of a bowl. 'Don't you! the others have had a bite and lain down? Why are you making a row?'

The word 'row' evidently suggested to Elijah the idea of violence.

'Elder, I'll do some mischief if you don't give me vodka!'

'Couldn't you bring him to reason?' the Elder aid, turning to Dútlov, who had lit the lantern, but had stopped, evidently to see what would happen, and was looking pityingly at his nephew out of the corner of his eyes, as if surprised at his childishness.

Elijah, looking down, again muttered:

'Vodka! Give . . . do mischief!'

'Leave off, Elijah!' said the Elder mildly. 'Really, now, leave off! You'd better!'

But before the words were out Elijah had jumped up and hit a window-pane with his fist, and shouting at the top of his voice: 'You would not listen to me, so there you have it!' rushed to the other window to break that too.

Polikéy in the twinkling of an eye rolled over twice and hid in the farthest corner of the top of the stove, so quickly that he scared all the cockroaches there. The Elder threw down his spoon and rushed toward Elijah. Dútlov slowly put down his lantern, untied his girdle, and shaking his head and making a clicking noise with his tongue, went up to Elijah, who was already struggling with the Elder and the inn-keeper's man, who were keeping him away from the window. They had caught his arms and seemed to be holding him fast; but the moment he saw his uncle with the girdle his strength increased tenfold and he tore himself away, and with rolling eyes and clenched fists stepped up to Dútlov.

'I'll kill you! Keep away, you brute! . . . You have ruined me, you and your brigands of sons, you've ruined me! . . . Why did they get me married? . . . Keep away! I'll kill you! . . .'

) Elijah was terrible. His face was purple, his eyes rolled, the whole of his healthy young body trembled as in a fever. He seemed to wish and

to be able to kill all the three men who were facing him.

'You're drinking your brother's blood, you blood-sucker!'

Something flashed across Dútlov's ever-serene face. He took a step forward.

'You won't take it peaceably!' said he suddenly. The wonder was where he got the energy; for with a quick motion he caught hold of his nephew, rolled to the ground with him, and with the aid of the Elder began binding his hands with the girdle. They struggled for about five minutes. At last with the help of the peasants Dútlov rose, pulling his coat out of Elijah's clutch. Then he raised Elijah, whose hands were tied behind his back, and made him sit down on a bench in a corner.

'I told you it would be the worse for you,' he said, still out of breath with the struggle, and pulling straight the narrow girdle tied over his shirt. 'Why sin? We shall all have to die! . . . Fold a coat for a pillow for him,' he said, turning to the inn-keeper's men, 'or the blood will go to his head.' And he tied the cord round his waist over his sheepskin and, taking up the lantern, went to see after the horses.

Elijah, pale, dishevelled, his shirt pulled out of place, was gazing round the room as though trying to remember where he was. The inn-keeper's men picked up the broken bits of glass and stuffed a coat into the hole in the window to keep the draught out. The Elder sat down again to his bowl.

'Ah, Elijah, Elijah! I'm sorry for you, really! What's to be done? There's Khoryúshkin . . . he, too, is married. Seems it can't be helped!'

'It's all on account of that fiend, my uncle, that I'm being ruined!' Elijah repeated, dryly and bitterly. 'He was chary of his own son! . . . Mother says the steward told him to buy me off. He won't:

He says he can't afford it. As if what my brother and I have brought into his house were a trifle! . . . He is a fiend!

Dútlov returned to the room, said a prayer in front of the icons, took off his outdoor things, and sat down beside the Elder. The cook brought more kvas and another spoon. Elijah grew silent, and closing his eyes lay down on the folded coat. The Elder pointed to him and shook his head silently. Dútlov waved his hand.

'As if one was not sorry! . . . My own brother's son! . . . And as if things were not bad enough it seems they also made me out a villain to him. . . . Whether it's his wife—she's a cunning little woman for all she's so young—that has put it into his head that we could afford to buy a substitute! . . . Anyhow, he's reproaching me. But one does pity the lad! . . .'

'Ah! he's a fine lad,' said the Elder.

'But I'm at the end of my tether with him! Tomorrow I shall let Ignat come, and his wife wanted to come too.'

'All right—let them come,' said the Elder, rising and climbing onto the stove. 'What is money? Money is dross!'

'If one had the money, who would grudge it?' muttered one of the inn-keeper's men, lifting his head.

'Ah, money, money! It causes much sin,' replied Dútlov. 'Nothing in the world causes so much sin, and the Scriptures say so too.'

'Everything is said there,' the workman agreed. 'There was a man told me how a merchant had stored up a heap of money and did not want to leave any behind; he loved it so that he took it with him to the grave. As he was dying he asked to have a small pillow buried with him. No one suspected



anything, and so it was done. Then his sons began looking for his money and nothing was to be found. At last one of them guessed that probably the notes were all in the pillow. The matter went to the Tsar, and he allowed the grave to be opened. And what do you think? They opened the coffin. There was nothing in the pillow, but the coffin was full of small snakes, and so it was buried again. . . . You see what money does!

'It's a fact, it brings much sin,' said Dútlov, and he got up and began saying his prayers.

When he had finished he looked at his nephew. The lad was asleep. Dútlov came up to him, untied the girdle with which he was bound, and then lay down. Another peasant went out to sleep with the horses.

## IX

As soon as all was quiet Polikéy climbed down softly, like a guilty man, and began to get ready. For some reason he felt uneasy at the thought of spending the night there among the recruits. The cocks were already crowing to one another more often. Drum had eaten all his oats and was straining towards the drinking-trough. Polikéy harnessed him and led him out past the peasants' carts. His cap with its contents was safe, and the wheels of the cart were soon rattling along the frosty road to Pokróvsk. Polikéy felt more at ease only when he had left the town behind. Till then he kept imagining that at any moment he might hear himself being pursued, that he would be stopped, and they would tie up his arms instead of Elijah's, and he would be taken to the recruiting station next morning. It might have been the frost, or it might have been fear, but something made cold shivers run down his back, and again and again he touched

Drum up. The first person he met was a priest in a tall fur cap, accompanied by a one-eyed labourer. Taking this for an evil omen Polikéy grew still more alarmed, but outside the town this fear gradually passed. Drum went on at a walking pace and the road in front became more visible. Polikéy took off his cap and felt the notes. 'Shall I hide it in my bosom?' he thought. 'No; I should have to undo my girdle. . . . Wait a bit! When I get to the foot of the hill I'll get down and put myself to rights. . . . The cap is sewn up tight at the top, and it can't fall through the lining. After all, I'd better not take the cap off till I get home.' When he had reached the foot of the incline Drum of his own accord galloped up the next hill and Polikéy, who was as eager as Drum to get home, did not check him. All was well—at any rate so Polikéy imagined, and he gave himself up to dreams of his mistress's gratitude, of the five rubles she would give him, and of the joy of his family. He took off his cap, felt for the envelope, and, smiling, put the cap tighter on his head. The velveteen crown of the cap was very rotten, and just because Akulína had carefully sewn up the rents in one place, it burst open in another; and the very movement by which Polikéy in the dusk had thought to push the envelope with the money deeper under the wadding, tore the cap farther and pushed out a corner of the envelope through the velveteen crown.

The dawn was appearing, and Polikéy, who had not slept all night, began to drowse. Pulling his cap lower down and thereby pushing the envelope still farther out, Polikéy in his drowsiness let his head knock against the front of the cart. He woke up near home and was about to catch hold of his cap, but feeling that it sat firmly on his head he did not take it off, convinced that the envelope was inside.

He gave Drum a touch, arranged the hay in the cart again, assumed once more the appearance of a well-to-do peasant, and proudly looking about rattled homewards.

There was the kitchen, there the house-seat quarters. There was the carpenter's wife carrying some linen; there was the office, and there the mistress's house where in a few moments Polikéy would show that he was a trustworthy and honest man. 'One can say anything about anybody,' he would say; and the lady would reply, 'Well, thank you, Polikéy! Here are three (or perhaps five, perhaps even ten) rubles,' and she would tell them to give him some tea, or even some vodka. It would not be amiss, after being out in the cold! 'With ten rubles we would have a treat for the holiday, and buy boots, and return Nikíta his four and a half rubles (it can't be helped! . . . He has begun bothering). . . .' When he was about a hundred paces from the house, Polikéy wrapped his coat round him, pulled his girdle straight and his collar, took off his cap, smoothed his hair, and without haste thrust his hand under the lining. The hand began to fumble faster and faster inside the lining, then the other hand went in too, while his face grew paler and paler. One of the hands went right through the cap. Polikéy fell on his knees, stopped the horse, and began searching in the cart among the hay and the things he had bought, feeling inside his coat and in his trousers. The money was nowhere to be found.

'Heavens! What does it mean? . . . What will happen? . . .' He began to roar, clutching at his hair.

But recollecting that he might be seen, he turned the horse round, pulled the cap on, and drove the surprised and disgusted Drum back along the road.

'I can't bear going out with Polikéy,' Drum must have thought. 'For once in his life he has fed and watered me properly, and then only to deceive me so unpleasantly! How hard I tried, running home! I am tired, and hardly have we got within smell of our hay than he starts driving me back!'

'Now then, you devil's jade!' shouted Polikéy through his tears, standing up in the cart, pulling at Drum's mouth, and beating him with the whip.

## X

ALL that day no one saw Polikéy in Pokróvsk. The mistress asked for him several times after dinner, and Aksyútka flew down to Akulína; but Akulína said he had not yet returned, and that evidently the market-gardener had detained him or something had happened to the horse. 'If only it has not gone lame!' she said. 'Last time, when Máxim went, he was on the road a whole day—had to walk back all the way.'

And Aksyútka turned her pendulums back to the house again, while Akulína, trying to calm her own fears, invented reasons to account for her husband's absence, but in vain! Her heart was heavy and she could not work with a will at any of the preparations for the morrow's holiday. She suffered all the more because the carpenter's wife assured her that she herself had seen 'a man just like Polikéy drive up to the avenue and then turn back again'. The children, too, were anxiously and impatiently expecting 'Daddy', but for another reason. Annie and Mary, being left without the sheepskin and the coat which made it possible to take turns out of doors, could only run out in their indoor dresses with increasing rapidity in a small circle round the house. This was not a little inconvenient to all the dwellers

in the serfs' quarters who wanted to go in or out. Once Mary ran against the legs of the carpenter's wife who was carrying water, and though she began to howl in anticipation as soon as she knocked against the woman's knees, she got her curls cuffed all the same, and cried still louder. When she did not knock against anyone, she flew in at the door and immediately climbing up by means of a tub got onto the top of the oven. Only the mistress and Akulína were really anxious about Polikéy; the children were concerned only about what he had on.

Egór Mikháylovich reporting to his mistress, in answer to her questions, 'Hasn't Polikéy come back yet?' and 'Where can he be?' answered: 'I can't say,' and seemed pleased that his expectations were being fulfilled. 'He ought to have been back by noon,' he added significantly.

All that day no one heard anything of Polikéy; only later on it was known that some neighbouring peasants had seen him running about on the road bareheaded, and asking everyone whether they hadn't found a letter. Another man had seen him asleep by the roadside beside a tied-up horse and cart. 'I thought he was tipsy,' the man said, 'and the horse looked as if it had not been watered or fed for two days, its sides were so fallen in.' Akulína did not sleep all night and kept listening, but Polikéy did not return. Had she been alone, or had she kept a cook or a maid, she would have felt still more unhappy; but as soon as the cocks crowed and the carpenter's wife got up, Akulína was obliged to rise and light the fire. It was a holiday. The bread had to come out of the oven before daybreak, kvas had to be made, cakes bak-d, the cow milked, frocks and shirts ironed, the children washed, water fetched, and her neighbour prevented from taking

'up the whole oven. So Akulína, still listening, set to work. It had grown light and the church bells were ringing, the children were up, but still Polikéy had not returned. There had been a first frost the day before, a little snow had fallen and lay in patches on the fields, on the road, and on the roofs; and now, as if in honour of the holiday, the day was fine, sunny, and frosty, so that one could see and hear a long way. But Akulína, standing by the brick oven, her head thrust into the opening, was so busy with her cakes that she did not hear Polikéy drive up, and only knew from the children's cries that her husband had returned.

Annie, as the eldest, had greased her hair and dressed herself without help. She wore a new but crumpled print dress—a present from the mistress. It stuck out as stiff as if it were made of bast, and was an object of envy to the neighbours; her hair glistened; she had smeared half an inch of tallow candle onto it. Her shoes, though not new, were thin ones. Mary was still wrapped in the old jacket and was covered with mud, and Annie would not let her come near her for fear of getting soiled. Mary was outside. She saw her father drive up with a sack. 'Daddy has come!' she shrieked, and rushed headlong through the door past Annie, dirtying her. Annie, no longer fearing to be soiled, went for her at once and hit her. Akulína could not leave her work, and only shouted at the children: 'Now, then . . . I'll whip you all!' and looked round at the door. Polikéy came in with a sack, and at once made his way to his own corner. It seemed to Akulína that he was pale, and his face looked as if he were either smiling or crying, but she had no time to find out which it was.

'Well, Polikéy, is it all right?' she called to him from the oven.

Polikéy muttered something that she did not understand.

'Eh?' she cried. 'Have you been to the mistress?'

Polikéy sat down on the bed in his corner looking wildly round him and smiling his guilty, intensely miserable smile. He did not answer for a long time.

'Eh, Polikéy? Why have you been so long?' came Akulína's voice.

'Yes, Akulína, I have handed the lady her money. How she thanked me!' he said suddenly, and began looking round and smiling still more uneasily. Two things attracted his feverishly staring eyes: the baby, and the cords attached to the hanging cradle. He went up to where the cradle hung, and began hastily undoing the knot of the rope with his thin fingers. Then his eyes fixed themselves on the baby; but just then Akulína entered, carrying a board of cakes, and Polikéy quickly hid the rope in his bosom and sat down on the bed.

'What is it, Polikéy? You are not like yourself,' said Akulína.

'Haven't slept,' he answered.

Suddenly something flitted past the window, and in a moment Aksyútka, the maid from 'up there', darted in like an arrow.

'The mistress orders Polikéy to come this minute,' she said—'this minute, Avdótya Nikoláevna's orders are . . . this minute!'

Polikéy looked at Akulína, then at the girl.

'I'm coming. What can she want?' he said, so simply that Akulína grew quieter. 'Perhaps she wants to reward me. Tell her I'm coming.'

He rose and went out. Akulína took the washing-trough, put it on a bench, filled it with water from the pails which stood by the door and from the cauldron in the oven, rolled up her sleeves, and tried the water.

'Come, Mary, I'll wash you.'

The cross, lisping little girl began howling.

'Come, you brat! I'll give you a clean smock. Now then, don't make a fuss. Come along. . . . I've still got your brother to wash.'

Meanwhile Polikéy had not followed the maid from 'up there', but had gone to quite a different place. In the passage by the wall was a ladder leading to the loft. Polikéy, when he came out, looked round, and seeing no one, bent down and climbed that ladder almost at a run, nimbly and hurriedly.

'Why ever doesn't Polikéy come?' asked the mistress impatiently of Dunyásha, who was dressing her hair. 'Where is Polikéy? Why hasn't he come?'

Aksyútka again flew to the serfs' quarters, and again rushed into the entry, calling Polikéy to her mistress.

'Why, he went long ago,' answered Akulína, who, having washed Mary, had just put her suckling baby-boy into the wash-trough and was moistening his thin short hair, regardless of his cries. The boy screamed, puckered his face, and tried to clutch something with his helpless little hands. Akulína supported his soft, plump, dimpled little back with one large hand, while she washed him with the other.

'See if he has not fallen asleep somewhere,' said she, looking round anxiously.

Just then the carpenter's wife, unkempt and with her dress unfastened and holding up her skirts, went up into the loft to get some things she had hung there to dry. Suddenly a shriek of horror filled the loft, and the carpenter's wife, like one demented, with her eyes closed, came down the steps on all fours, backwards, sliding rather than running.

'Polikéy!' she screamed.



Akulína let go the baby.

'Has hung himself!' roared the carpenter's wife.

Akulína rushed out into the passage, paying no heed to the baby, who rolled over like a ball and fell backwards with his little legs in the air and his head under water.

'On a rafter . . . hanging!' the carpenter's wife ejaculated, but stopped when she saw Akulína.

Akulína darted up the ladder, and before anyone could stop her she was at the top, but from there with a terrible scream she fell back like a corpse, and would have been killed if the people who had come running from every corner had not been in time to catch her.

## XI

FOR several minutes nothing could be made out amidst the general uproar. A crowd of people had collected, everyone was shouting and talking, and the children and old women were crying. Akulína lay unconscious. At last the men, the carpenter and the steward who had run to the place, went up the ladder, and the carpenter's wife began telling for the twentieth time how she, 'suspecting nothing, went to fetch a dress, and just looked round like this—and saw . . . a man; and I looked again, and a cap is lying inside out, close by. I look . . . his legs are dangling. I went cold all over! Is it pleasant? . . . To think of a man hanging himself, and that I should be the one to see him! . . . How I came clattering down I myself don't remember . . . it's a miracle how God preserved me! Truly, the Lord has had mercy on me! . . . Is it a trifle? . . . so steep and from such a height. Why, I might have been killed!'

The men who had gone up had the same tale to tell. Polikéy, in his shirt and trousers, was hanging

from a rafter by the cord he had taken from the cradle. His cap, turned inside out, lay beside him, his coat and sheepskin were neatly folded and lay close by. His feet touched the ground, but he no longer showed signs of life. Akulína regained consciousness, and again made for the ladder, but was held back.

'Mamma, Sëmka is drownded!' the lisping little girl suddenly cried from their *corner*. Akulína tore herself away and ran to the *corner*. The baby lay on his back in the trough and did not stir, and his little legs were not moving. Akulína snatched him out, but he did not breathe or move. She threw him on the bed, and with arms akimbo burst into such loud, piercing, terrible laughter that Mary, who at first laughed too, covered her ears with her hands, and ran out into the passage crying. The neighbours thronged into the *corner*, wailing and weeping. They carried out the little body and began rubbing it, but in vain. Akulína tossed about on the bed and laughed—laughed so that all who heard her were horror-stricken. Only now, seeing this motley crowd of men and women, old people and children, did one realize what a number of people and what sort of people lived in the serfs' quarters. All were bustling and talking, many wept, but nobody did anything. The carpenter's wife still found people who had not heard her tale of how her sensitive feelings were shocked by the unexpected sight, and how God had preserved her from falling down the ladder. An old man who had been a footman, with a woman's jacket thrown over his shoulders, was telling how in the days of the old master a woman had drowned herself in the pond. The steward sent messengers to the priest and to the constable, and appointed men to keep guard. Aksyútka, the maid from 'up there', kept gazing with staring eyes at the

opening that led to the loft, and though she could not see anything was unable to tear herself away and go back to her mistress. Agatha Mikháylovna, who had been lady's-maid to the former proprietress, was weeping and asking for some tea to soothe her nerves. Anna the midwife was laying out the little body on the table, with her plump practised hands moistened with olive oil. Other women stood round Akulína, silently looking at her. The children, huddled together in the corner, peeped at their mother and burst into howls; and then subsiding for a moment, peeped again, and huddled still closer. Boys and men thronged round the porch, looking in at the door and the windows with frightened faces unable to see or understand anything, and asking one another what was the matter. One said the carpenter had chopped off his wife's foot with an axe. Another said that the laundress had been brought to bed of triplets; a third that the cook's cat had gone mad and bitten several people. But the truth gradually spread, and at last it reached the mistress; and it seems no one understood how to break it to her. That rough Egór blurted the facts straight out to her, and so upset the lady's nerves that it was a long time before she could recover. The crowd had already begun to quiet down, the carpenter's wife set the samovar to boil and made tea, and the outsiders, not being invited, thought it improper to stay longer. Boys had begun fighting outside the porch. Everybody now knew what had happened, and crossing themselves they began to disperse, when suddenly the cry was raised: 'The mistress! The mistress!' and everybody crowded and pressed together to make way for her, but at the same time everybody wanted to see what she was going to do. The lady, with pale and tear-stained face, entered the passage, crossed

the threshold, and went into Akulína's *corner*. Dozens of heads squeezed together and gazed in at the door. One pregnant woman was squeezed so that she gave a squeal, but took advantage of that very circumstance to secure a front place for herself. And how could one help wishing to see the lady in Akulína's *corner*? For the house-serfs it was just what the coloured lights are at the end of a show. It's sure to be great when they burn the coloured fires; and it must be an important occasion when the lady in her silks and lace enters Akulína's *corner*. The lady went up and took Akulína's hand, but Akulína snatched it away. The old house-serfs shook their heads reprovingly.

'Akulína!' said the lady. 'You have your children—so take care of yourself!'

Akulína burst out laughing and got up.

'My children are all silver, all silver! I don't keep paper money,' she muttered very rapidly. 'I told Polikéy, "Take no notes," and there now, they've smeared him, smeared him with tar—tar and soap, madam! Any scabbiness you may have it will get rid of at once . . .' and she laughed still louder.

The mistress turned away, and gave orders that the doctor's assistant should come with mustard poultices. 'Bring some cold water!' she said, and began looking for it herself; but seeing the dead baby with Granny Anna the midwife beside it, the lady turned away, and everybody saw how she hid her face in her handkerchief and burst into tears; while Granny Anna (it was a pity the lady did not see it—she would have appreciated it, and it was all done for her benefit) covered the baby with a piece of linen, straightened his arms with her plump, deft hands, shook her head, pouted, drooped her eyelids, and sighed with so much feeling that everybody could see how excellent a heart she had.

But the lady did not see it, she could not see anything. She burst out sobbing and went into hysterics. Holding her up under the arms they led her out into the porch and took her home. 'That's all there was to be seen of her!' thought many, and again began to disperse. Akulína went on laughing and talking nonsense. She was taken into another room and bled, and plastered over with mustard poultices, and ice was put on her head. Yet she did not come to her senses, and did not weep, but laughed, and kept doing and saying such things that the kind people who were looking after her could not help laughing themselves.

## XII

THE holiday was not a cheerful one at Pokróvsk. Though the day was beautiful the people did not go out to amuse themselves: no girls sang songs in the street, the factory hands who had come home from town for the day did not play on their concertinas and balaláykas and did not play with the girls. Everybody sat about in corners, and if they spoke did so as softly as if an evil one were there who could hear them. It was not quite so bad in the daytime, but when the twilight fell and the dogs began to howl, and when, to make matters worse, a wind sprang up and whistled down the chimneys, such fear seized all the people of the place that those who had tapers lit them before their icons. Anyone who happened to be alone in his corner went to ask the neighbours' permission to stay the night with them, to be less lonely, and anyone whose business should have taken him into one of the out-houses, did not go, but pitilessly left the cattle without fodder that night. And the holy water, of which everyone kept a little bottle to charm away anything evil, was

all used up during the night. Many even heard something walking about with heavy steps up in the loft, and the blacksmith saw a serpent fly straight towards it. In Polikéy's *corner* there was no one; the children and the mad woman had been taken elsewhere. Only the little dead body lay there, and two old women sat and watched it, while a third, a pilgrim woman, was reading the psalms, actuated by her own zeal, not for the sake of the baby but in a vague way because of the whole calamity. The mistress had willed it so. The pilgrim woman and these old women themselves heard how, as soon as they finished reading a passage of the Psalter, the rafters above would tremble and someone would groan. Then they would say, 'Let God arise,' and all would be quiet again. The carpenter's wife invited a friend and, not sleeping all night, with her aid drank up all the tea she had laid in for the whole week. They, too, heard how the rafters creaked overhead, and a noise as if sacks were tumbling down. The presence of the peasant watchmen kept up the courage of the house-serfs somewhat, or they would have died of fear that night. The peasants lay on some hay in the passage, and afterwards declared that they too had heard wonderful things up in the loft, though at the time they were conversing very calmly together about the conscription, munching crusts of bread, scratching themselves, and above all so filling the passage with the peculiar odour characteristic of peasants that the carpenter's wife, happening to pass by, spat and called them 'peasant-brood'. However that might be, the dead man was still dangling in the loft, and it seemed as if the evil one himself had overshadowed the serfs' quarters with his huge wings that night, showing his power and coming closer to these people than he had ever done before. So at least

they all felt. I do not know if they were right; I even think they were quite mistaken. I think that if some bold fellow had taken a candle or lantern that terrible night, and crossing himself, or even without crossing himself, had gone up into the loft—slowly dispelling before him the horror of the night with the candle, lighting up the rafters, the sand, the cobweb-covered flue-pipe, and the tippets left behind by the carpenter's wife—till he came to Polikéy, and, conquering his fears, had raised the lantern to the level of the face, he would have beheld the familiar spare figure: the feet touching the ground (the cord had stretched), the body bending lifelessly to one side, no cross visible under the open shirt, the head drooping on the breast, the good-natured face with open sightless eyes, and the meek, guilty smile, and a solemn calmness and silence over all. Really the carpenter's wife, crouching in a corner of her bed with dishevelled hair and frightened eyes and telling how she heard the sacks falling, was far more terrible and frightful than Polikéy, though his cross was off and lay on a rafter.

'Up there,' that is, in the mistress's house, reigned the same horror as in the serfs' quarters. Her bedroom smelt of eau-de-cologne and medicine. Dunyásha was melting yellow wax and making a plaster. What the plaster was for I don't know, but it was always made when the lady was unwell. And now she was so upset that she was quite ill. To keep Dunyásha's courage up her aunt had come to stay the night, so there were four of them, including the girl, sitting in the maid's room, and talking in low voices.

'Who will go to get some oil?' asked Dunyásha.

'Nothing will induce me to go, Avdótya Pávlovna!' the second maid said decidedly.

'Nonsense! You and Aksyútka go together.'

'I'll run across alone. I'm not afraid of anything!' said Aksyútka, and at once became frightened.

'Well then, go, dear; ask Granny Anna to give you some in a tumbler and bring it here; don't spill any,' said Dunyáša.

Aksyútka lifted her skirt with one hand, and being thereby prevented from swinging both arms, swung one of them twice as violently across the line of her progression, and darted away. She was afraid, and felt that if she should see or hear anything, even her own living mother, she would perish with fright. She flew, with her eyes shut, along the familiar pathway.

### XIII

'Is the mistress asleep or not?' suddenly asked a deep peasant-voice close to Aksyútka. She opened her eyes, which she had kept shut, and saw a figure that seemed to her taller than the house. She screeched, and flew back so fast that her skirts floated behind her. With one bound she was on the porch and with another in the maid's room, where she threw herself on her bed with a wild yell. Dunyáša, her aunt, and the second maid almost died of terror, and before they had time to recover they heard heavy, slow, hesitating steps in the passage and at their door. Dunyáša rushed to her mistress, spilling the melted wax. The second maid hid herself behind the skirts that hung on the wall; the aunt, a more determined character, was about to hold the door to the passage closed, but it opened and a peasant entered the room. It was Dútlov, with his boat-like shoes. Paying no heed to the maids' fears, he looked round for an icon, and not seeing the tiny one in the left-hand corner of the room, he crossed himself in front of a cupboard in which teacups were kept, laid his cap on the



window-sill, and thrusting his arm deep into the bosom of his coat as if he were going to scratch himself under his other arm, he pulled out the letter with the five brown seals stamped with an anchor. Dunyáša's aunt held her hands to her heart and with difficulty brought out the words:

'Well, you did give me a fright, Naúmych! I can't utter a word! I thought my last moment had come!'

'Is that the way to behave?' said the second maid, appearing from under the skirts,

'The mistress herself is upset,' said Dunyáša, coming out of her mistress's door. 'What do you mean, shoving yourself in through the maids' entrance without leave? . . . Just like a peasant lout!'

Dútlov, without excusing himself, explained that he wanted to see the lady.

'She is not well,' said Dunyáša.

At this moment Aksyútka burst into such loud and unseemly laughter that she was obliged to hide her face in the pillow on the bed, from which for a whole hour, in spite of Dunyáša's and the aunt's threats, she could not for long lift it without going off again as if something were bursting in her pink print bosom and rosy cheeks. It seemed to her so funny that everybody should have been so scared, that she again hid her head in the pillows and scraped the floor with her shoe and jerked her whole body as if in convulsions.

Dútlov stopped and looked at her attentively, as if to ascertain what was happening to her, but turned away again without having discovered what it was all about, and continued:

'You see, it's just this—it's a very important matter,' he said. 'You just go and say that a peasant has found the letter with the money.'

'What money?'

1. Dunyáša, before going to report, read the address and questioned Dútlov as to when and how he had found this money which Polikéy was to have brought back from town. Having heard all the details and pushed the little errand-girl, who was still convulsed with laughter, out into the vestibule, Dunyáša went to her mistress; but to Dútlov's surprise the mistress would not see him and did not say anything intelligible to Dunyáša.

'I know nothing about it and don't want to know anything!' the lady said. 'What peasant? What money? . . . I can't and won't see anyone! He must leave me in peace.'

'What am I to do?' said Dútlov, turning the envelope over; 'it's not a small sum. What is written on it?' he asked Dunyáša, who again read the address to him.

Dútlov seemed in doubt. He was still hoping that perhaps the money was not the mistress's and that the address had not been read to him right, but Dunyáša confirmed it, and he put the envelope back into his bosom with a sigh, and was about to go.

'I suppose I shall have to hand it over to the police-constable,' he said.

'Wait a bit! I'll try again,' said Dunyáša, stopping him, after attentively following the disappearance of the envelope into the bosom of the peasant's coat. 'Let me have the letter.'

Dútlov took it out again, but did not at once put it into Dunyáša's outstretched hand.

'Say that Semën Dútlov found it on the road . . .'

'Well, let me have it!'

'I did think it was just nothing—only a letter; but a soldier read out to me that there was money inside . . .'

'Well then, let me have it.'

'I dared not even go home first to . . .'

Dútlov

continued, still not parting with the precious envelope. 'Tell the lady so.'

Dunyáša took it from him and went again to her mistress.

'O my God, Dunyáša, don't speak to me of that money!' said the lady in a reproachful tone. 'Only to think of that little baby . . .'

'The peasant does not know to whom you wish it to be given, madam,' Dunyáša again said.

The lady opened the envelope, shuddering at the sight of the money, and pondered.

'Dreadful money! How much evil it does!' she said.

'It is Dútlov, madam. Do you order him to go, or will you please come out and see him—and is the money all safe?' asked Dunyáša.

'I don't want this money. It is terrible money! What it has done! Tell him to take it himself if he likes,' said the lady suddenly, feeling for Dunyáša's hand. 'Yes, yes, yes!' she repeated to the astonished Dunyáša; 'let him take it altogether and do what he likes with it.'

'Fifteen hundred rubles,' remarked Dunyáša, smiling as if at a child.

'Let him take it all!' the lady repeated impatiently. 'How is it you don't understand me? It is unlucky money. Never speak of it to me again! Let the peasant who found it take it. Go, go along!'

Dunyáša went out into the maids' room.

'Is it all there?' asked Dútlov.

'You'd better count it yourself,' said Dunyáša, handing him the envelope. 'My orders are to give it to you.'

Dútlov put his cap under his arm, and, bending forward, began to count the money.

'Have you got a counting-frame?'

<sup>1</sup> The abacus, with wires and beads to count on, was much used in Russia.

Dútlov had an idea that the lady was stupid and could not count, and that that was why she ordered him to do so.

'You can count it at home—the money is yours . . .!' Dunyáša said crossly. '“I don't want to see it,” she says; “give it to the man who brought it.”'

Dútlov, without unbending his back, stared at Dunyáša.

Dunyáša's aunt flung up her hands.

'O holy Mother! What luck the Lord has sent him! O holy Mother!'

The second maid would not believe it.

'You don't mean it, Avdótya Pávlovna; you're joking!'

'Joking, indeed! She told me to give it to the peasant. . . . There, take your money and go!' said Dunyáša, without hiding her vexation. 'One man's sorrow is another man's luck!'

'It's not a joke . . . fifteen hundred rubles!' said the aunt.

'It's even more,' stated Dunyáša. 'Well, you'll have to give a ten-kopek candle to St. Nicholas,' she added sarcastically. 'Why don't you come to your senses? If it had come to a poor man, now! . . . But this man has plenty of his own.'

Dútlov at last grasped that it was not a joke, and began gathering together the notes he had spread out to count and putting them back into the envelope. But his hands trembled, and he kept glancing at the maids to assure himself that it was not a joke.

'See! He can't come to his senses he's so pleased,' said Dunyáša, implying that she despised both the peasant and the money. 'Come, I'll put it up for you.'

She was going to take the notes, but Dútlov

would not let her. He crumpled them together, pushed them in deeper, and took his cap.

‘Are you glad?’

‘I hardly know what to say! It’s really . . .

He did not finish, but waved his hand, smiled, and went out almost crying.

The mistress rang.

‘Well, have you given it to him?’

‘I have.’

‘Well, was he very glad?’

‘He was just like a madman.’

‘Ah! call him back. I want to ask him how he found it. Call him in here; I can’t come out.’

Dunyáša ran out and found the peasant in the entry. He was still bareheaded, but had drawn out his purse and was stooping, untying its strings, while he held the money between his teeth. Perhaps he imagined that as long as the money was not in his purse it was not his. When Dunyáša called him he grew frightened.

‘What is it, Avdótya . . . Avdótya Pávlovna? Does she want to take it back? Couldn’t you say a word for me? . . . Now really, and I’d bring you some nice honey.’

‘Indeed! Much you ever brought!’

Again the door was opened, and the peasant was brought in to the lady. He felt anything but cheerful. ‘Oh dear, she’ll want it back!’ he thought on his way through the rooms, lifting his feet for some reason as if he were walking through high grass, and trying not to stamp with his bast shoes. He could make nothing of his surroundings. Passing by a mirror he saw flowers of some sort and a peasant in bast shoes lifting his feet high, a gentleman with an eyeglass painted on the wall, some kind of green tub, and something white. . . . There, now! The something white began to speak. It was his mistress. He

did not understand anything but only stared. He did not know where he was, and everything appeared as in a fog.

'Is that you, Dútlov?'

'Yes, lady. . . . Just as it was, so I left it .. .' he said. 'I was not glad so help me God! How I've tired out my horse! . . .'

'Well, it's your luck!' she remarked contemptuously, though with a kindly smile. 'Take it, take it for yourself.'

He only rolled his eyes.

'I am glad that you got it. God grant that it may be of use. Well, are you glad?'

'How could I help being glad? I'm so glad, ma'am, so glad! I will pray for you always! . . . So glad that, thank Heaven, our lady is alive! It was not my fault.'

'How did you find it?'

'Well, I mean, we can always do our best for our lady, quite honourably, and not anyhow . . .'

'He is in a regular muddle, madam,' said Dunyáša.

'I had taken my nephew, the conscript, and as I was driving back along the road I found it. Polikéy must have dropped it.'

'Well, then, go—go, my good man! I am glad you found it!'

'I am so glad, lady!' said the peasant.

Then he remembered that he had not thanked her properly, and did not know how to behave. The lady and Dunyáša smiled, and then he again began stepping as if he were walking in very high grass, and could hardly refrain from running so afraid was he that he might be stopped and the money taken from him.

## XIV

WHEN he got out into the fresh air Dútlov stepped aside from the road to the lindens, even undoing his belt to get at his purse more easily, and began putting away the money. His lips were twitching, stretching and drawing together again, though he uttered no sound. Having put away his money and fastened his belt, he crossed himself and went staggering along the road as though he were drunk,<sup>1</sup> so full was he of the thoughts that came rushing to his mind. Suddenly he saw the figure of a man coming towards him. He called out; it was Efím, with a cudgel in his hand, on watch at the serfs' quarters.

'Ah, Daddy Semën!' said Efím cheerfully, drawing nearer (Efím felt it uncanny to be alone). 'Have you got the conscripts off, daddy?'

'We have. What are you after?'

'Why, I've been put here to watch over Polikéy who's hanged himself.'

'And where is he?'

'Up there, hanging in the loft, so they say,' answered Efím, pointing with his cudgel through the darkness to the roof of the serfs' quarters.

Dútlov looked in the direction of the arm, and though he could see nothing he puckered his brows,<sup>1</sup> screwed up his eyes, and shook his head.

'The police-constable has come,' said Efím, 'so the coachman said. He'll be taken down at once. Isn't it horrible at night, daddy? Nothing would make me go up at night even if they ordered me to. If Egór Mikháylovich were to kill me outright I wouldn't go . . .'

'What a sin, oh, what a sin!' Dútlov kept repeating, evidently for propriety's sake and not even thinking what he was saying. He was about to go

on his way, but the voice of Egór Mikháylovich stopped him.

'Hi! watchman! Come here!' shouted Egór Mikháylovich from the porch of the office.

Efím replied to him.

'Who was that other peasant standing with you?' 'Dútlov.'

'Ah! and you too, Semén! Come here!'

Having drawn near, Dútlov, by the light of a lantern the coachman was carrying, recognized Egór Mikháylovich and a short man with a cockade on his cap, dressed in a long uniform overcoat. This was the police-constable.

'Here, this old man will come with us too,' said Egór Mikháylovich on seeing him.

The old man felt a bit uncomfortable, but there was no getting out of it.

'And you, Efím—you're a bold lad! Run up into the loft where he's hanged himself, and set the ladder straight for his honour to mount.'

Efím, who had declared that he would not go near the loft for anything in the world, now ran towards it, clattering with his bast shoes as if they were logs.

The police-officer struck a light and lit a pipe. He lived about a mile and a half off, and having just been severely reprimanded for drunkenness by his superior, was in a zealous mood. Having arrived at ten o'clock at night, he wished to view the corpse at once. Egór Mikháylovich asked Dútlov how he came to be there. On the way Dútlov told the steward about the money he had found and what the lady had done, and said he was coming to ask Egór Mikháylovich's sanction. To Dútlov's horror the steward asked for the envelope and examined it. The police-constable even took the envelope in his hand and briefly and dryly asked the details.



'Oh dear, the money is gone!' thought Dútlov and began justifying himself. But the police-constable handed him back the money.

'What a piece of luck for the clodhopper!' he said.

'It comes handy for him,' said Egór Mikháylovich. 'He's just been taking his nephew to be conscripted, and now he'll buy him out.'

'Ah!' said the policeman, and went on in front.

'Will you buy him off—Elijah, I mean?' asked Egór Mikháylovich.

'How am I to buy him off? Will there be money enough? And perhaps it's too late . . .'

'Well, you know best,' said the steward, and they both followed the police-constable.

They approached the serfs' house, where the ill-smelling watchmen stood waiting in the passage with a lantern. Dútlov followed them. The watchmen looked guilty, perhaps because of the smell they were spreading, for they had done nothing wrong. All were silent.

'Where is he?' asked the police-constable.

'Here,' said Egór Mikháylovich in a whisper. 'Efim,' he added, 'you're a bold lad, go on in front with the lantern.'

Efim had already put a plank straight at the top of the ladder, and seemed to have lost all fear. Taking two or three steps at a time, he clambered up with a cheerful look, only turning round to light the way for the police-constable. The constable was followed by Egór Mikháylovich. When they had disappeared above, Dútlov, with one foot on the bottom step, sighed and stopped. Two or three minutes passed. The footsteps in the loft were no longer heard; they had no doubt reached the body.

'Daddy, they want you,' Efim called down through the opening.

Dútlov began going up. The light of the lantern

showed only the upper part of the bodies of the police-constable and of Egór Mikháylovich beyond the rafters. Beyond them again someone else was standing with his back turned. It was Polikéy. Dútlov climbed over a rafter and stopped, crossing himself.

'Turn him round, lads!' said the police-constable. No one stirred.

'Efím, you're a bold lad,' said Egór Mikháylovich.

The 'bold lad' stepped across a rafter, turned Polikéy round, and stood beside him, looking with a most cheerful face now at Polikéy now at the constable, as a showman exhibiting an albino or Julia Pastrana<sup>1</sup> looks now at the public and now at what he is exhibiting, ready to do anything the spectators may wish.

'Turn him round again.'

Polikéy was turned round, his arms slightly swaying and his feet dragging in the sand on the floor.

'Catch hold, and take him down.'

'Shall we cut the rope through, your honour?' asked Egór Mikháylovich. 'Hand us an axe, lads!'

The watchmen and Dútlov had to be told twice before they set to, but the 'bold lad' handled Polikéy as he would have handled a sheep's carcass. At last the rope was cut through and the body taken down and covered up. The police-constable said that the doctor would come next day, and dismissed them all.

## XV

DÚTLOV went homeward, still moving his lips. At first he had an uncanny feeling, but it passed as he drew nearer home, and a feeling of gladness gradually penetrated his heart. In the village he heard

<sup>1</sup> Julia Pastrana was exhibited as being half-woman half-monkey, and created a considerable sensation.

songs and drunken voices. Dútlov never drank, and this time too he went straight home. It was late when he entered his hut. His old wife was asleep. His eldest son and grahdsons were asleep on the stove, and his second son in the store-room. Elijah's wife alone was awake, and sat on the bench bare-headed, in a dirty, working-day smock, wailing. She did not come out to meet her uncle, but only sobbed louder, lamenting her fate, when he entered. According to the old woman, she 'lamented' very fluently and well, taking into consideration the fact that at her age she could not have had much practice.

The old woman rose and got supper for her husband. Dútlov turned Elijah's wife away from the table, saying: 'That's enough, that's enough!' Aksínya went away, and lying down on a bench continued to lament. The old woman put the supper on the table and afterwards silently cleared it away again. The old man did not speak either. When he had said grace he hiccupped, washed his hands, took the counting-frame from a nail in the wall, and went into the storeroom. There he and the old woman spoke in whispers for a little while, and then, after she had gone away, he began counting on the frame, making the beads click. Finally he banged the lid of the chest standing there, and clambered into the space under the floor. For a long time he went on bustling about in the room and in the space below. When he came back to the living-room it was dark in the hut. The wooden splint that served for a candle had gone out. His old woman, quiet and silent in the daytime, had rolled herself up on the sleeping-bunk and filled the hut with her snoring. Elijah's noisy young wife was also asleep, breathing quietly. She lay on the bench dressed just as she had been, and with nothing

under her head for a pillow. Dútlov began to pray, then looked at Elijah's wife, shook his head, put out the light, hiccupped again, and climbed up on the stove, where he lay down beside his little grandson. He threw down his plaited bast shoes from the stove in the dark, and lay on his back looking up at the rafter which was hardly discernible just over his head above the stove, and listening to the sounds of the cockroaches swarming along the walls, and to the sighs, the snoring, the rubbing of one foot against another, and the noise made by the cattle outside. It was a long time before he could sleep. The moon rose. It grew lighter in the hut. He could see Aksínya in her corner and something he could not make out: was it a coat his son had forgotten, or a tub the women had put there, or a man standing there? Perhaps he was drowsing, perhaps not: anyhow he began to peer into the darkness. Evidently that evil spirit who had led Polikéy to commit his awful deed and whose presence was felt that night by all the house-serfs, had stretched out his wing and reached across the village to the house in which lay the money that he had used to ruin Polikéy. At last, Dútlov felt his presence and was ill at ease. He could neither sleep nor get up. After noticing the something he could not make out, he remembered Elijah with his arms bound, and Aksínya's face and her eloquent lamentations; and he recalled Polikéy with his swaying hands. Suddenly it seemed to the old man that someone passed by the window. 'Who was that? Could it be the village elder coming so early with a notice?' thought he. 'How did he open the door?' thought the old man, hearing a step in the passage. 'Had the old woman not put up the bar when she went out into the passage?' The dog began to howl in the yard and he came stepping along the passage, so the old man related after-

wards, as though he were trying to find the door, then passed on and began groping along the wall. He stumbled over a tub and made it clatter, and again began groping as if feeling for the latch. Now he had hold of the latch. A shiver ran down the old man's body. Now *he* pulled the latch and entered in the shape of a man. Dútlov knew it was *he*. He wished to cross himself, but could not. *He* went up to the table which was covered with a cloth, and pulling it off, threw it on the floor and began climbing onto the stove. The old man knew that *he* had taken the shape of Polikéy. *He* was showing his teeth and his hands were swinging about. *He* climbed up, fell on the old man's chest, and began to strangle him.

'The money's mine!' muttered Polikéy.

'Let me go! I won't do it!' Semën tried to say, but could not.

Polikéy was pressing down on him with the weight of a mountain of stone. Dútlov knew that if he said a prayer *he* would let him go, and he knew which prayer he ought to recite, but could not utter it. His grandson sleeping beside him uttered a shrill scream and began to cry. His grandfather had pressed him against the wall. The child's cry loosened the old man's lips. 'Let God arise! . . .' he said. *He* pressed less hard. 'And let his enemies be scattered . . .' spluttered Dútlov. *He* got off the stove. Dútlov heard his two feet strike the floor. Dútlov went on repeating in turn all the prayers he knew. *He* went towards the door, passed the table and slammed the door so that the whole hut shook. Everybody but the grandfather and grandson continued to sleep however. The grandfather, trembling all over, muttered prayers, while the grandson was crying himself to sleep and pressing close to his grandfather. All became quiet once more. The old

man lay still. A cock crowed behind the wall close to Dútlov's ear. He heard the hens stirring, and a cockerel unsuccessfully trying to crow in answer to the old cock. Something moved over the old man's legs. It was the cat; she jumped on her soft pads from the stove to the floor, and stood mewing by the door. The old man got up and opened the window. It was dark and muddy in the street. The front of the cart was standing there close to the window. Crossing himself he went out barefoot into the yard to the horses. One could see that he had been there too. The mare, standing under the lean-to beside a tub of chaff, had got her foot into the cord of her halter and had spilt the chaff, and now, lifting her foot, turned her head and waited for her master. Her foal had tumbled over a heap of manure. The old man raised him to his feet, disentangled the mare's foot and fed her, and went back to the hut. The old woman got up and lit the splint. 'Wake the lads, I'm going to the town!' And taking a wax taper from before the icon Dútlov lit it and went down with it into the opening under the floor. When he came up again lights were burning not only in his hut but in all the neighbouring houses. The young fellows were up and preparing to start. The women were coming in and out with pails of milk. Ignát was harnessing the horse to one cart and the second son was greasing the wheels of another. The young wife was no longer wailing. She had made herself neat and had bound a shawl over her head, and now sat waiting till it would be time to go to town to say good-bye to her husband.

The old man seemed particularly stern. He did not say a word to anyone, put on his best coat, tied his belt round him, and with all Polikéy's money in the bosom of his coat, went to Egór Mikháylovich.

'Don't dawdle,' he called to his son, who was

turning the wheels round on the raised and new greased axle. 'I'll be back in a minute; see if everything is ready.'

The steward had only just got up and was drinking tea. He himself was preparing to go to town deliver up the recruits.

'What is it?' he asked.

'Egór Mikháylovich, I want to buy the lad. Do be so good! You said t'other day that you knew one in the town that was willing. . . . Explain to me how to do it; we are ignorant people.'

'Why, have you reconsidered it?'

'I have, Egór Mikháylovich. I'm sorry for him. My brother's child after all, whatever he may be. I'm sorry for him! It's the cause of much sorrow money is. Do be good enough to explain it to me,' he said, bowing to his waist.

Egór Mikháylovich, as was his wont on such occasions, stood for a long time thoughtfully smacking his lips. Then, having considered the matter he wrote two notes and told him what to do in town and how to do it.

When Dútlov got home, the young wife had already set off with Ignát. The fat roan mare stood ready harnessed at the gate. Dútlov broke a stick out of the hedge and, lapping his coat over, got into the cart and whipped up the horse. He made the mare run so fast that her fat sides quickly shrank, and Dútlov did not look at her so as not to feel sorry for her. He was tormented by the thought that he might come too late for the recruiting, that Elijah would go as a soldier and the devil's money would be left on his hands.

I will not describe all Dútlov's proceedings that morning. I will only say that he was specially lucky. The man to whom Egór Mikháylovich had given him a note had a volunteer quite ready who was

already twenty-three silver rubles in debt and had been passed by the recruiting-board. His master wanted four hundred silver rubles for him and a buyer in the town had for the last three weeks been offering him three hundred. Dútlov settled the matter in a couple of words. 'Will you take three twenty-five?' he said, holding out his hand, but with a look that showed that he was prepared to give more. The master held back his hand and went on asking four hundred. 'You won't take three and a quarter?' Dútlov said, catching hold with his left hand of the man's right and preparing to slap his own right hand down on it. 'You won't take it? Well, God be with you!' he said suddenly, smacking the master's hand with the full swing of his other hand and turning away with his whole body. 'It seems it has to be so . . . take three and a half hundred! Get out the discharge and bring the fellow along. And now here are two ten-ruble notes on account. Is it enough?'

And Dútlov unfastened his girdle and got out the money.

The man, though he did not withdraw his hand, yet did not seem quite to agree and, not accepting the deposit money, went on stipulating that Dútlov should wet the bargain and stand treat to the volunteer.

'Don't commit a sin,' Dútlov kept repeating as he held out the money. 'We shall all have to die some day,' he went on, in such a mild, persuasive and assured tone that the master said:

'So be it, then!' and again clapped Dútlov's hand and began praying for God's blessing. 'God grant you luck,' he said.

They woke the volunteer, who was still sleeping after yesterday's carouse, examined him for some reason, and went with him to the offices of the



Administration. The recruit was merry. He demanded rum as a refresher, for which Dútlov gave him some money, and only when they came into the vestibule of the recruiting-board did his courage fail him. For a long time they stood in the entrance-hall, the old master in his full blue cloak and the recruit in a short sheepskin, his eyebrows raised and his eyes staring. For a long time they whispered, tried to get somewhere, looked for somebody, and for some reason took off their caps and bowed to every copying-clerk they met, and meditatively listened to the decision which a scribe whom the master knew brought out to them. All hope of getting the business done that day began to vanish, and the recruit was growing more cheerful and unconstrained again, when Dútlov saw Egór Mikháylovich, seized on him at once, and began to beg and bow to him. Egór Mikháylovich helped him so efficiently that by about three o'clock the recruit, to his great dissatisfaction and surprise, was taken into the hall and placed for examination, and amid general merriment (in which for some reason everybody joined, from the watchmen to the President), he was undressed, dressed again, shaved, and led out at the door; and five minutes later Dútlov counted out the money, received the discharge and, having taken leave of the volunteer and his master, went to the lodging-house where the Pokróvsk recruits were staying. Elijah and his young wife were sitting in a corner of the kitchen, and as soon as the old man came in they stopped talking and looked at him with a resigned expression, but not with goodwill. As was his wont the old man said a prayer, and he then unfastened his belt, got out a paper, and called into the room his eldest son, Ignát and Elijah's mother, who were in the yard.

'Don't sin, Elijah,' he said, coming up to his

nephew. 'Last night you said a word to me. . . . Don't I pity you? I remember how my brother left you to me. If it had been in my power would I have let you go? God has sent me luck, and I am not grudging it you. Here it is, the paper'; and he put the discharge on the table and carefully smoothed it out with his stiff, unbending fingers.

All the Pokróvsk peasants, the inn-keeper's men, and even some outsiders, came in from the yard. All guessed what was happening, but no one interrupted the old man's solemn discourse.

'Here it is, the paper! Four hundred silver rubles I've given for it. Don't reproach your uncle.'

Elijah rose, but remained silent not knowing what to say. His lips quivered with emotion. His old mother came up and would have thrown herself sobbing on his neck; but the old man motioned her away slowly and authoritatively and continued speaking.

'You said a word to me yesterday,' the old man again repeated. 'You stabbed me to the heart with that word as with a knife! Your dying father left you to me and you have been as my own son to me, and if I have wronged you in any way, well, we all live in sin! Is it not so, good Christian folk?' he said, turning to the peasants who stood round. 'Here is your own mother and your young wife, and here is the discharge for you. I don't regret the money, but forgive me for Christ's sake!'

And, turning up the skirts of his coat, he deliberately sank to his knees and bowed down to the ground before Elijah and his wife. The young people tried in vain to restrain him, but not till his forehead had touched the floor did he get up. Then, after giving his skirts a shake, he sat down on a bench. Elijah's mother and wife howled with joy, and words of approval were heard among the

crowd. 'That is just, that's the godly way,' said one; 'What's money? You can't buy a fellow for money,' said another. 'What happiness!' said a third; 'no two ways about it, he's a just man!' Only the peasants who were to go as recruits said nothing, and went quietly out into the yard.

Two hours later Dútlov's two carts were driving through the outskirts of the town. In the first, to which was harnessed the roan mare, her sides fallen in and her neck moist with sweat, sat the old man and Ignát. Behind them jerked strings of ring-shaped fancy-bread. In the second cart, in which nobody held the reins, the young wife and her mother-in-law, with shawls over their heads, were sitting, sedate and happy. The former held a bottle of vodka under her apron. Elijah, very red in the face, sat all in a heap with his back to the horse jolting against the front of the cart, biting into a roll and talking incessantly. The voices, the rumbling of the cart-wheels on the stony road, and the snorting of the horses, blent into one note of merriment. The horses, swishing their tails, increased their speed more and more, feeling themselves on the homeward road. The passers-by, whether driving or on foot, involuntarily turned round to look at the happy family party.

Just as they left the town the Dútlovs overtook a party of recruits. A group of them were standing in a ring outside a tavern. One of the recruits, with that unnatural expression on his face which comes of having the front of the head shaved,<sup>1</sup> his grey cap pushed back, was vigorously strumming a balaláyka, another, bareheaded and with a bottle of vodka in his hand, was dancing in the middle of the ring. Ignát stopped his horse and got down to tighten the

<sup>1</sup> On being conscripted a man's head was partially shaved to make desertion more difficult.

traces. All the Dútlóvs looked with curiosity, approval, and amusement at the dancer. The recruit seemed not to see anyone, but felt that the public admiring him had grown larger, and this added to his strength and agility. He danced briskly. His brows were knitted, his flushed face was set, and his lips were fixed in a grin that had long since lost all meaning. It seemed as if all the strength of his soul was concentrated on placing one foot as quickly as possible after the other, now on the heel and now on the toe. Sometimes he stopped suddenly and winked to the balaláyka-player, who began playing still more briskly, strumming on all the strings and even striking the case with his knuckles. The recruit would stop, but even when he stood still he still seemed to be dancing all over. Then he began slowly jerking his shoulders, and suddenly twirling round, leaped in the air with a wild cry, and descending, crouched down, throwing out first one leg and then the other. The little boys laughed, the women shook their heads, the men smiled approvingly. An old sergeant stood quietly by, with a look that seemed to say: 'You think it wonderful, but we have long been familiar with it.' The balaláyka-player seemed tired; he looked lazily round, struck a false chord, and suddenly knocked on the case with his knuckles, and the dance came to an end.

'Eh, Alekha,' he said to the dancer, pointing at Dútlóv, 'there's your sponsor!'

'Where? You, my dearest friend!' shouted Alekha, the very recruit whom Dútlóv had bought and staggering forward on his weary legs and holding the bottle of vodka above his head he moved towards the cart. 'Míshka, a glass!' he cried to the player. 'Master! My dearest friend! What a pleasure, really!' he shouted, drooping his tipsy head over the cart, and he began to treat the men

and women to vodka. The men drank, but the women refused. 'My dear friends, what can I offer you?' exclaimed Alëkha, embracing the old women.

A woman selling eatables was standing among the crowd. Alëkha noticed her, seized her tray, and poured its contents into the cart.

'I'll pay, no fear, you devil!' he howled tearfully, pulling a purse from his pocket and throwing it to Míshka.

He stood leaning with his elbows on the cart and looking with moist eyes at those who sat in it.

'Which is the mother . . . you?' he asked. 'I must treat you too.'

He stood thinking for a moment, then he put his hand in his pocket and drew out a new folded handkerchief, hurriedly took off a sash which was tied round his waist under his coat, and also a red scarf he was wearing round his neck, and, crumpling them all together, thrust them into the old woman's lap.

'There! I'm sacrificing them for you,' he said in a voice that was growing more and more subdued.

'What for? Thank you, sonny! Just see what a simple lad it is!' said the old woman, addressing Dútlov, who had come up to their cart.

Alëkha was now quite quiet, quite stupefied, and looked as if he were falling asleep. He drooped his head lower and lower.

'It's for you I am going, for you I am perishing!' he muttered; 'that's why I am giving you gifts.'

'I dare say he, too, has a mother,' said some one in the crowd. 'What a simple fellow! What a pity!' Alëkha lifted his head.

'I have a mother,' said he; 'I have a father too. All have given me up. Listen to me, old woman,'

he went on, taking Elijah's mother by the hand. 'I have given you presents. Listen to me for Christ's sake! Go to Vódnoe village, ask for the old woman Nikónovna—she's my own mother, see? Say to this same old woman, Nikónovna, the third hut from the end, by the new well. Tell her that Alekha—her son, you see. . . . Eh! musician! strike up!' he shouted.

And muttering something he immediately began dancing again, and hurled the bottle with the remaining vodka to the ground.

Ignát got into the cart and was about to start.

'Good-bye! May God bless you!' said the old woman, wrapping her cloak closer round her.

Alekha suddenly stopped.

'Go to the devil!' he shouted, clenching his fists threateningly. 'May your mother be . . .'

'O Lord! exclaimed Elijah's mother, crossing herself.

Ignát touched the reins, and the carts rattled on again. Alekha, the recruit, stood in the middle of the road with clenched fists and with a look of fury on his face, and abused the peasants with all his might.

'What are you stopping for? Go on, devils! cannibals!' he cried. 'You won't escape me! . . . Devil's clodhoppers!'

At these words his voice broke, and he fell full length to the ground just where he stood.

Soon the Dútlovs reached the open fields, and looking back could no longer see the crowd of recruits. Having gone some four miles at a walking pace Ignát got down from his father's cart, in which the old man lay asleep, and walked beside Elijah's cart.

Between them they emptied the bottle they had brought from town. After a while Elijah began a

song, the women joined in, and Ignát shouted merrily in time with the song. A post-chaise drove merrily towards them. The driver called lustily to his horses as he passed the two festive carts, and the post-boy turned round and winked at the men and women who with flushed faces sat jolting inside singing their jovial song.

# **STRIDER: THE STORY OF A HORSE**





## STRIDER: THE STORY OF A HORSE

### I.

**H**IGHER and higher receded the sky, wider and wider spread the streak of dawn, whiter grew the pallid silver of the dew, more lifeless the sickle of the moon, and more vocal the forest. People began to get up, and in the owner's stable-yard the sounds of snorting, the rustling of litter, and even the shrill angry neighing of horses crowded together and at variance about something, grew more and more frequent.

'Hold on! Plenty of time! Hungry?' said the old huntsman, quickly opening the creaking gate. 'Where are you going?' he shouted, threateningly raising his arm at a mare that was pushing through the gate.

The keeper, Nester, wore a short Cossack coat with an ornamental leather girdle, had a whip slung over his shoulder, and a hunk of bread wrapped in a cloth stuck in his girdle. He carried a saddle and bridle in his arms.

The horses were not at all frightened or offended at the horseman's sarcastic tone: they pretended that it was all the same to them and moved leisurely away from the gate; only one old brown mare, with a thick mane, laid back an ear and quickly turned her back on him. A small filly standing behind her and not at all concerned in the matter took this opportunity to whinny and kick out at a horse that happened to be near.

'Now then!' shouted the keeper still louder and more sternly, and he went to the opposite corner of the yard.

Of all the horses in the enclosure (there were about a hundred of them) a piebald gelding,

standing by himself in a corner under the pent-house and licking an oak post with half-closed eyes, displayed least impatience.

It is impossible to say what flavour the piebald gelding found in the post, but his expression was serious and thoughtful while he licked.

'Stop that!' shouted the groom, drawing nearer to him and putting the saddle and a glossy saddle-cloth on the manure heap beside him.

The piebald gelding stopped licking, and without moving gave Nester a long look. The gelding did not laugh, nor grow angry, nor frown, but his whole belly heaved with a profound sigh and he turned away. The horseman put his arm round the gelding's neck and placed the bridle on him.

'What are you sighing for?' said Nester.

The gelding switched his tail as if to say, 'Nothing in particular, Nester!' Nester put the saddle-cloth and saddle on him, and this caused the gelding to lay back his ears, probably to express dissatisfaction, but he was only called a 'good-for-nothing' for it and his saddle-girth were tightened.

At this the gelding blew himself out, but a finger was thrust into his mouth and a knee hit him in the stomach, so that he had to let out his breath. In spite of this, when the saddle-cloth was being buckled on he again laid back his ears and even looked round. Though he knew it would do no good he considered it necessary to show that it was disagreeable to him and that he would always express his dissatisfaction with it. When he was saddled he thrust forward his swollen off foot and began champing his bit, this too for some reason of his own, for he ought to have known by that time that a bit cannot have any flavour at all.

Nester mounted the gelding by the short stirrup, unwound his long whip, straightened his coat out

from under his knee, seated himself in the manner peculiar to coachmen, huntsmen, and horsemen, and jerked the reins. The gelding lifted his head to show his readiness to go where ordered, but did not move. He knew that before starting there would be much shouting, and that Nester, from the seat on his back, would give many orders to Váška, the other groom, and to the horses. And Nester did shout: 'Váška! Hullo, Váška. Have you let out the brood mares? Where are you going, you devil? Now then! Are you asleep . . . Open the gate! Let the brood mares get out first!'—and so on.

The gate creaked. Váška, cross and sleepy, stood at the gate-post holding his horse by the bridle and letting the other horses pass out. The horses followed one another and stepped carefully over the straw, smelling at it: fillies, yearling colts with their manes and tails cut, suckling foals, and mares in foal carrying their burden heedfully, passed one by one through the gateway. The fillies sometimes crowded together in twos and threes, throwing their heads across one another's backs and hitting their hoofs against the gate, for which they received a rebuke from the grooms every time. The foals sometimes darted under the legs of the wrong mares and neighed loudly in response to the short whinny of their own mothers.

A playful filly, directly she had got out at the gate, bent her head sideways, kicked up her hind legs, and squealed, but all the same she did not dare to run ahead of old dappled Zhuldýba who at a slow and heavy pace, swinging her belly from side to side, marched as usual ahead of all the other horses.

In a few minutes the enclosure that had been so animated became deserted, the posts stood gloomily under the empty penthouse, and only trampled

straw mixed with manure was to be seen. Used as he was to that desolate sight it probably depressed the piebald gelding. As if making a bow he slowly lowered his head and raised it again, sighed as deeply as the tightly drawn girth would allow, and hobbling along on his stiff and crooked legs shambled after the herd, bearing old Nester on his bony back.

'I know that as soon as we get out on the road he will begin to strike a light and smoke his wooden pipe with its brass mountings and little chain,' thought the gelding. 'I am glad of it because early in the morning when it is dewy I like that smell, it reminds me of much that was pleasant; but it's annoying that when his pipe is between his teeth the old man always begins to swagger and thinks himself somebody and sits sideways, always sideways—and that side hurts. However, it can't be helped! Suffering for the pleasure of others is nothing new to me. I have even begun to find a certain equine pleasure in it. Let him swagger, poor fellow! Of course he can only do that when he is alone and no one sees him—let him sit sideways!' thought the gelding, and stepping carefully on his crooked legs he went along the middle of the road.

## II

HAVING driven the horses to the riverside where they were to graze, Nester dismounted and unsaddled. Meanwhile the herd had begun gradually to spread over the untrampled meadow, covered with dew and by the mist that rose from it and the encircling river.

When he had taken the bridle off the piebald gelding, Nester scratched him under the neck, in response to which the gelding expressed his gratitude and satisfaction by closing his eyes. 'He

likes it, the old dog!' muttered Nester. The gelding however did not really care for the scratching at all, and pretended that it was agreeable merely out of courtesy. He nodded his head in assent to Nester's words; but suddenly Nester quite unexpectedly and without any reason, perhaps imagining that too much familiarity might give the gelding a wrong idea of his importance, pushed the gelding's head away from himself without any warning and, swinging the bridle, struck him painfully with the buckle on his lean leg, and then without saying a word went up the hillock to a tree-stump beside which he generally seated himself.

Though this action grieved the piebald gelding he gave no indication of it, but leisurely switching his scanty tail, sniffed at something and, biting off some wisps of grass merely to divert his mind, walked to the river. He took no notice whatever of the antics of the young mares, colts, and foals around him, who were filled with the joy of the morning; and knowing that, especially at his age, it is healthier to have a good drink on an empty stomach and to eat afterwards, he chose a spot where the bank was widest and least steep, and wetting his hoofs and fetlocks, dipped his muzzle in the water and began to suck it up through his torn lips, to expand his filling sides, and from pleasure to switch his scanty tail with its half bald stump.

An aggressive chestnut filly, who always teased the old fellow and did all kinds of unpleasant things to him, now came up to him in the water as if attending to some business of her own, but in reality merely to foul the water before his nose. But the piebald gelding, who had already had his fill, is though not noticing the filly's intention quietly drew one foot after the other out of the mud in

which they had sunk, jerked his head, and stepping aside from the youthful crowd started grazing. Sprawling his feet apart in different ways and not trampling the grass needlessly, he went on eating without unbending himself for exactly three hours. Having eaten till his belly hung down from his steep skinny ribs like a sack, he balanced himself equally on his four sore legs so as to have as little pain as possible, especially in his off foreleg which was the weakest, and fell asleep.

Old age is sometimes majestic, sometimes ugly, and sometimes pathetic. But old age can be both ugly and majestic, and the gelding's old age was just of that kind.

He was tall, rather over fifteen hands high. His spots were black, or rather they had been black, but had now turned a dirty brown. He had three spots, one on his head, starting from a crooked bald patch on the side of his nose and reaching half-way down his neck. His long mane, filled with burrs, was white in some places and brownish in others. Another spot extended down his off side to the middle of his belly, the third, on his croup, touched part of his tail and went half-way down his quarters. The rest of the tail was whitish and speckled. The big bony head, with deep hollows over the eyes and a black hanging lip that had been torn at some time, hung low and heavily on his neck, which was so lean that it looked as though it were carved of wood. The pendant lip revealed a blackish, bitten tongue and the yellow stumps of the worn lower teeth. The ears, one of which was slit, hung low on either side, and only occasionally moved lazily to drive away the pestering flies. Of the forelock, one of which was still long hung back behind an ear; his uncovered forehead was dented and rough, and the skin hung down like bags on his broad jaw- He

**Bones.** The veins of his neck had grown knotty, and twitched and shuddered at every touch of a fly. The expression of his face was one of stern patience, thoughtfulness, and suffering.

His forelegs were crooked to a bow at the knees, there were swellings over both hoofs, and on one leg, on which the piebald spot reached half-way down, there was a swelling at the knee as big as a fist. The hind legs were in better condition, but apparently long ago his haunches had been so rubbed that in places the hair would not grow again. The leanness of his body made all four legs look disproportionately long. The ribs, though straight, were so exposed and the skin so tightly drawn over them, that it seemed to have dried fast to the spaces between. His back and withers were covered with marks of old lashings, and there was a fresh sore behind, still swollen and festering; the black dock of his tail, which showed the vertebrae, hung down long and almost bare. On his dark-brown croup—near the tail—was a scar, as though of a bite, the size of a man's hand and covered with white hair. Another scarred sore was visible on one of his shoulders. His tail and hocks were dirty because of chronic bowel troubles. The hair on the whole body, though short, stood out straight. Yet in spite of the hideous old age of this horse one involuntarily paused to reflect when one saw him, and an expert would have said at once that he had been a remarkably fine horse in his day. The expert would even have said that there was only one breed in Russia that could furnish such breadth of bone, such immense knees, such hoofs, such slender canons, such a well-shaped neck, and above all such a skull, such eyes—large, black, and clear—and such a thoroughbred network of veins on head and neck, and such delicate skin and hair.



There was really something majestic in that horse's figure and in the terrible union in him of repulsive indications of decrepitude, emphasized by the motley colour of his hair, and his manner which expressed the self-confidence and calm assurance that go with beauty and strength. Like a living ruin he stood alone in the midst of the dewy meadow, while not far from him could be heard the tramping, snorting and youthful neighing and whinnying of the scattered herd.

### III

THE sun had risen above the forest and now shone brightly on the grass and the winding river. The dew was drying up and condensing into drops, the last of the morning mist was dispersing like tiny smoke-clouds. The cloudlets were becoming curly but there was as yet no wind. Beyond the river the verdant rye stood bristling, its ears curling into little horns, and there was an odour of fresh verdure and blossom. A cuckoo called rather hoarsely from the forest, and Nester, lying on his back in the grass, was counting the calls to ascertain how many years he still had to live. The larks were rising over the rye and the meadow. A belated hare, finding himself among the horses, leaped into the open, sat down by a bush, and pricked his ears to listen. Vaska fell asleep with his head in the grass, the fillies, making a still wider circle about him, scattered over the field below. The old mares went about snorting, and made a shining track across the dewy grass, always choosing a place where no one would disturb them. They no longer grazed, but only nibbled at choice tufts of grass. The whole herd was moving imperceptibly in one direction.

And again it was old Zhuldýba who, stepping sedately in front of the others, showed the possibility

of going farther. Black Múshka, a young mare who had foaled for the first time, with uplifted tail kept whinnying and snorting at her bluish foal; the young filly *Satin*, sleek and brilliant, bending her head till her black silky forelock hid her forehead and eyes, played with the grass, nipping off a little and tossing it and stamping her leg with its shaggy fetlock all wet with dew. One of the older foals, probably imagining he was playing some kind of game, with his curly tail raised like a plume, ran for the twenty-sixth time round his mother, who quietly went on grazing, having grown accustomed to her son's ways, and only occasionally glanced askance at him with one of her large black eyes.

One of the very youngest foals, black, with a big head, a tuft sticking up in astonishment between his ears, and a little tail still twisted to one side as it had been in his mother's womb, stood motionless, his ears pricked and his dull eyes fixed, gazing at the frisking and prancing foal—whether admiring or condemning him it is hard to say. Some of the foals were sucking and butting with their noses, some—heaven knows why—despite their mothers' call were running at an awkward little trot in quite the opposite direction as if searching for something, and then, for no apparent reason, stopping and neighing with desperate shrillness. Some lay on their sides in a row, some were learning to eat grass, some again were scratching themselves behind their ears with their hind legs. Two mares still in foal were walking apart from the rest, and while slowly moving their legs continued to graze. The others evidently respected their condition, and none of the young ones ventured to come near to disturb them. If any saucy youngsters thought of approaching them, the mere movement of an ear or tail sufficed to show them all how improper such behaviour was.

The colts and yearling fillies, pretending to be grown up and sedate, rarely jumped or joined the merry company. They grazed in a dignified manner, curving their close-cropped swan-like necks, and flourished their little broom-like tails as if they also had long ones. Just like the grown-ups they lay down, rolled over, or rubbed one another. The merriest group was composed of the two- and three-year-old fillies and mares not yet in foal. They almost always walked about together like a separate merry virgin crowd. Among them you could hear sounds of tramping, whinnying, neighing, and snorting. They drew close together, put their heads over one another's necks, sniffed at one another, jumped, and sometimes at a semi-trot semi-amble, with tails lifted like an oriflamme, raced proudly and coquettishly past their companions. The most beautiful and spirited of them was the mischievous chestnut filly. What she devised the others did; wherever she went the whole crowd of beauties followed. That morning the naughty one was in a specially playful mood. She was seized with a joyous fit, just as human beings sometimes are. Already at the riverside she had played a trick on the old gelding, and after that she ran along through the water pretending to be frightened by something, gave a hoarse squeal, and raced full speed into the field so that Váška had to gallop after her and the others who followed her. Then after grazing a little she began rolling, then teasing the old mares by dashing in front of them, then she drove away a small foal from its dam and chased it as if meaning to bite it. Its mother was frightened and stopped grazing, while the little foal cried in a piteous tone, but the mischievous one did not touch him at all, she only wanted to frighten him and give a performance for the benefit of her

companions, who watched her escapade approvingly. Then she set out to turn the head of a little roan horse with which a peasant was ploughing in a rye-field far beyond the river. She stopped, proudly lifted her head somewhat to one side, shook herself, and neighed in a sweet, tender, long-drawn voice. Mischief, feeling, and a certain sadness, were expressed in that call. There was in it the desire for and the promise of love, and a pining for it.

'There in the thick reeds is a corn-crake running backwards and forwards and calling passionately to his mate; there is the cuckoo, and the quails are singing of love, and the flowers are sending their fragrant dust to each other by the wind. And I too am young and beautiful and strong,' the mischievous one's voice said, 'but it has not yet been allowed me to know the sweetness of that feeling, and not only to experience it, but no lover—not a single one—has ever seen me!'

And this neighing, sad and youthful and fraught with feeling, was borne over the lowland and the field to the roan horse far away. He pricked up his ears and stopped. The peasant kicked him with his bast shoe, but the little horse was so enchanted by the silvery sound of the distant neighing that he neighed too. The peasant grew angry, pulled at the reins, and kicked the little roan so painfully in the stomach with his bast shoes that he could not finish his neigh and walked on. But the little roan felt a sense of sweetness and sadness, and for a long time the sounds of unfinished and passionate neighing, and of the peasant's angry voice, were carried from the distant rye-field over to the herd.

If the sound of her voice alone so overpowered the little roan that he forgot his duty, what would have happened had he seen the naughty beauty as she stood pricking her ears, breathing in the air with

dilated nostrils, ready to run, trembling with her whole beautiful body, and calling to him?

But the mischievous one did not brood long over her impressions. When the neighing of the roan died away she gave another scornful neigh, lowered her head and began pawing the ground, and then she went to wake and to tease the piebald gelding. The piebald gelding was the constant martyr and butt of those happy youngsters. He suffered more from them than at the hands of men. He did no harm to either. People needed him, but why should these young horses torment him?

#### IV

HE was old, they were young; he was lean, they were sleek; he was miserable, they were gay; and so he was quite alien to them, an outsider, an utterly different creature whom it was impossible for them to pity. Horses only have pity on themselves, and very occasionally on those in whose skins they can easily imagine themselves to be. But was it the old gelding's fault that he was old, poor and ugly? . . .

One might think not, but in equine ethics it was, and only those were right who were strong, young, and happy—those who had life still before them, whose every muscle quivered with superfluous energy, and whose tails stood erect. Maybe the piebald gelding himself understood this and in his quiet moments was ready to agree that it was his fault that he had already lived his life, and that he had to pay for that life; but after all he was a horse and often could not suppress a sense of resentment, sadness, and indignation, when he looked at those youngsters who tormented him for what would befall them all at the end of their lives. Another cause of the horses' lack of pity was their aristo-

cratic pride. Every one of them traced back its pedigree, through father or mother, to the famous Creamy, while the piebald was of unknown parentage. He was a chance comer, purchased three years before at a fair for eighty assignat rubles.

The chestnut filly, as if taking a stroll, passed close by the piebald gelding's nose and pushed him. He knew at once what it was, and without opening his eyes laid back his ears and showed his teeth. The filly wheeled round as if to kick him. The gelding opened his eyes and stepped aside. He did not want to sleep any more and began to graze. The mischief-maker, followed by her companions, again approached the gelding. A very stupid two-year-old white-spotted filly who always imitated the chestnut in everything, went up with her and, as imitators always do, went to greater lengths than the instigator. The chestnut always went up as if intent on business of her own, and passed by the gelding's nose without looking at him, so that he really did not know whether to be angry or not, and that was really funny.

She did the same now, but the white-spotted one, who followed her and had grown particularly lively, bumped right against the gelding with her chest. He again showed his teeth, whinnied, and with an agility one could not have expected of him, rushed after her and bit her flank. The white-spotted one kicked out with all her strength and dealt the old horse a heavy blow on his thin barrel ribs. He snorted heavily and was going to rush at her again, but bethought himself and drawing a deep sigh stepped aside. The whole crowd of young ones must have taken as a personal affront the impertinence the piebald gelding had permitted himself to offer to the white-spotted one, and for the rest of the day did not let him graze in peace for a moment, so

that the keeper had to quieten them several times and could not understand what had come over them.

The gelding felt so offended that he went up himself to Nester when the old man was getting ready to drive the horses home, and felt happier and quieter when he was saddled and the old man had mounted him.

God knows what the gelding was thinking as he carried old Nester on his back: whether he thought bitterly of the pertinacious and merciless youngsters, or forgave his tormenters with the contemptuous and silent pride suited to old age. At all events he did not betray his thoughts till he reached home.

That evening, as Nester drove the horses past the huts of the domestic serfs, he noticed a peasant horse and cart tethered to his porch: some friends had come to see him. When driving the horses in he was in such a hurry that he let the gelding in without unsaddling him and, shouting to Váška to do it, shut the gate and went to his friends. Whether because of the affront to the white-spotted filly—Creamy's great-grand-daughter—by that 'mangy trash' bought at the horse fair, who did not know his father or mother, and the consequent outrage to the aristocratic sentiment of the whole herd, or because the gelding with his high saddle and without a rider presented a strangely fantastic spectacle to the horses, at any rate something quite unusual occurred that night in the paddock. All the horses, young and old, ran after the gelding, showing their teeth and driving him all round the yard; one heard the sound of hoofs striking against his bare ribs, and his deep groaning. He could no longer endure this, nor could he avoid the blows. He stopped in the middle of the paddock, his face expressing first the repulsive weak malevolence of helpless old age,

and then despair: he dropped his ears, and then something happened that caused all the horses to quiet down. The oldest of the mares, Vyazapúrikha, went up to the gelding, sniffed at him and sighed. The gelding sighed too . . .

## V

IN the middle of the moonlit paddock stood the tall gaunt figure of the gelding, still wearing the high saddle with its prominent peak at the bow. The horses stood motionless and in deep silence around him as if they were learning something new and unexpected. And they had learnt something new and unexpected.

This is what they learnt from him . . .

### *First Night*

Yes, I am the son of Affable I and of Bába. My pedigree name is Muzhík, and I was nicknamed Strider by the crowd because of my long and sweeping strides, the like of which was nowhere to be found in all Russia. There is no more thoroughbred horse in the world. I should never have told you this. What good would it have done? You would never have recognized me: even Vyazapúrikha, who was with me in Khrénovo, did not recognize me till now. You would not have believed me if Vyazapúrikha were not here to be my witness, and I should never have told you this. I don't need equine sympathy. But you wished it. Yes, I am that Strider whom connoisseurs are looking for and cannot find—that Strider whom the count himself knew and got rid of from his stud because I outran Ivan, his favourite.

When I was born I did not know what *piebald*



meant—I thought I was just a horse. I remember that the first remark we heard about my colour, struck my mother and me deeply.

I suppose I was born in the night; by the morning, having been licked over by my mother, I already stood on my feet. I remember I kept wanting something and that everything seemed very surprising and yet very simple. Our stalls opened into a long warm passage and had latticed doors through which everything could be seen.

My mother offered me her teats but I was still so innocent that I poked my nose now between her forelegs and now under her udder. Suddenly she glanced at the latticed door and lifting her leg over me stepped aside. The groom on duty was looking into our stall through the lattice.

‘Why, Bába has foaled!’ he said, and began to draw the bolt. He came in over the fresh bedding and put his arms round me. ‘Just look, Tarás!’ he shouted, ‘what a piebald he is—a regular magpie!’

I darted away from him and fell on my knees.

‘Look at him—the little devil!’

My mother became disquieted, but did not take my part, she only stepped a little to one side with a very deep sigh. Other grooms came to look at me, and one of them ran to tell the stud groom.

Everybody laughed when they looked at my spots, and they gave me all kinds of strange names, but neither I nor my mother understood those words. Till then there had been no piebalds among all my relatives. We did not think there was anything bad in it. Everybody even then praised my strength and my form.

‘See what a frisky fellow!’ said the groom. ‘There’s no holding him.’

Before long the stud groom came and began to

express astonishment at my colour; he even seemed aggrieved.

'And who does the little monster take after?' he said. 'The general won't keep him in the stud. Oh, Bába, you have played me a trick!' he addressed my mother. 'You might at least have dropped one with just a star—but this one is all piebald!'

My mother did not reply, but as usual on such occasions drew a sigh.

'And what devil does he take after—he's just like a peasant-horse!' he continued. 'He can't be left in the stud—he'd shame us. But he's well built—very well!' said he, and so did everyone who saw me.

A few days later the general himself came and looked at me, and again everyone seemed horrified at something, and abused me and my mother for the colour of my hair. 'But he's a fine colt—very fine!' said all who saw me.

Until spring we all lived separately in the brood mares' stable, each with our mother, and only occasionally when the snow on the stable roofs began to melt in the sun were we let out with our mothers into the large paddock strewn with fresh straw. There I first came to know all my near and my distant relations. Here I saw all the famous mares of the day coming out from different doors with their little foals. There was the old mare Dutch, Fly (Creamy's daughter), Ruddy the riding-horse, Wellwisher—all celebrities at that time. They all gathered together with their foals, walking about in the sunshine, rolling on the fresh straw and sniffing at one another like ordinary horses. I have never forgotten the sight of that paddock full of the beauties of that day. It seems strange to you to think, and hard to believe, that I was ever young and frisky, but it was so. This same Vyaza-

púrikha was then a yearling filly whose mane had just been cut; a dear, merry, lively little thing, but—and I do not say it to offend her—although among you she is now considered a remarkable thoroughbred she was then among the poorest horses in the stud. She will herself confirm this.

My mottled appearance, which men so disliked, was very attractive to all the horses; they all came round me, admired me, and frisked about with me. I began to forget what men said about my mottled appearance, and felt happy. But I soon experienced the first sorrow of my life and the cause of it was my mother. When the thaw had set in, the sparrows twittered under the eaves, spring was felt more strongly in the air, and my mother's treatment of me changed.

Her whole disposition changed: she would frisk about without any reason and run round the yard, which did not at all accord with her dignified age; then she would consider and begin to neigh, and would bite and kick her sister mares, and then begin to sniff at me and snort discontentedly; then on going out into the sun she would lay her head across the shoulder of her cousin, Lady Merchant, dreamily rub her back, and push me away from her teats.

One day the stud groom came and had a halter put on her and she was led out of the stall. She neighed and I answered and rushed after her, but she did not even look back at me. The strapper, Tarás, seized me in his arms while they were closing the door after my mother had been led out.

I bolted and upset the strapper on the straw, but the door was shut and I could only hear the receding sound of my mother's neighing; and that neigh did not sound like a call to me but had another expression. Her voice was answered from afar by a

powerful voice—that of Dóbry I, as I learned later, who was being led by two grooms, one on each side, to meet my mother.

I don't remember how Tarás got out of my stall: I felt too sad, for I knew that I had lost my mother's love for ever. 'And it's all because I am piebald!' I thought, remembering what people said about my colour, and such passionate anger overcame me that I began to beat my head and knees against the walls of the stall and continued till I was sweating all over and quite exhausted.

After a while my mother came back to me. I heard her run up the passage at a trot and with an unusual gait. They opened the door for her and I hardly knew her—she had grown so much younger and more beautiful. She sniffed at me, snorted, and began to whinny. Her whole demeanour showed that she no longer loved me.

She told me of Dóbry's beauty and her love of him. Those meetings continued and the relations between my mother and me grew colder and colder.

Soon after that we were let out to pasture. I now discovered new joys which made up to me for the loss of my mother's love. I had friends and companions. Together we learnt to eat grass, to neigh like the grown-ups, and to gallop round our mothers with lifted tails. That was a happy time. Everything was forgiven me, everybody loved me, admired me, and looked indulgently at anything I did. But that did not last long.

Soon afterwards something dreadful happened to me . . .

The gelding heaved a deep sigh and walked away from the other horses.

The dawn had broken long before. The gates creaked. Nester came in, and the horses separated.

The keeper straightened the saddle on the gelding's back and drove the horses out.

## VI

### *Second Night*

As soon as the horses had been driven in they again gathered round the piebald, who continued:

In August they separated me from my mother and I did not feel particularly grieved. I saw that she was again heavy (with my brother, the famous Usán) and that I could no longer be to her what I had been. I was not jealous, but felt that I had become indifferent to her. Besides I knew that having left my mother I should be put in the general division of foals, where we were kept two or three together and were every day let out in a crowd into the open. I was in the same stall with Darling. Darling was a saddle-horse, who was subsequently ridden by the Emperor and portrayed in pictures and sculpture. At that time he was a mere foal, with soft glossy coat, a swanlike neck, and straight slender legs taut as the strings of an instrument. He was always lively, good-tempered and amiable, always ready to gambol, exchange licks, and play tricks on horse or man. Living together as we did we involuntarily made friends, and our friendship lasted the whole of our youth. He was merry and giddy. Even then he began to make love, courted the fillies, and laughed at my guilelessness. To my misfortune vanity led me to imitate him, and I was soon carried away and fell in love. And this early tendency of mine was the cause of the greatest change in my fate. It happened that I was carried away . . . Vyazapúrikha was a year older than I, and

we were special friends, but towards the autumn I noticed that she began to be shy with me . . .

But I will not speak of that unfortunate period of my first love; she herself remembers my mad passion, which ended for me in the most important change of my life.

The strappers rushed to drive her away and to beat me. That evening I was shut up in a special stall where I neighed all night as if foreseeing what was to happen next.

In the morning the General, the stud groom, the stablemen and the strappers came into the passage where my stall was, and there was a terrible hubbub. The General shouted at the stud groom, who tried to justify himself by saying that he had not told them to let me out but that the grooms had done it of their own accord. The General said that he would have everybody flogged, and that it would not do to keep young stallions. The stud groom promised that he would have everything attended to. They grew quiet and went away. I did not understand anything, but could see that they were planning something concerning me.

The day after that I ceased neighing for ever. I became what I am now. The whole world was changed in my eyes. Nothing mattered any more; I became self-absorbed and began to brood. At first everything seemed repulsive to me. I even ceased to eat, drink, or walk, and there was no idea of playing. Now and then it occurred to me to give a kick, to gallop, or to start neighing, but immediately came the question: Why? What for? and all my energy died away.

One evening I was being exercised just when the horses were driven back from pasture. I saw in the distance a cloud of dust enveloping the indistinct

but familiar outlines of all our brood mares. I heard their cheerful snorting and the trampling of their feet. I stopped, though the cord of the halter by which the groom was leading me cut the nape of my neck, and I gazed at the approaching drove as one gazes at a happiness that is lost for ever and cannot return. They approached, and I could distinguish one after another all the familiar, beautiful, stately, healthy, sleek figures. Some of them also turned to look at me. I was unconscious of the pain the groom's jerking at my halter inflicted. I forgot myself and from old habit involuntarily neighed and began to trot, but my neighing sounded sad, ridiculous and meaningless. No one in the drove made sport of me, but I noticed that out of decorum many of them turned away from me. They evidently felt it repugnant, pitiable, indelicate, and above all ridiculous, to look at my thin expressionless neck, my large head (I had grown lean in the meantime), my long, awkward legs, and the silly awkward gait with which by force of habit I trotted round the groom. No one answered my neighing—they all looked away. Suddenly I understood it all, understood how far I was for ever removed from them, and I do not remember how I got home with the groom.

Already before that I had shown a tendency towards gravity and thoughtfulness, but now a decided change came over me. My being piebald, which aroused such curious contempt in men, my terrible and unexpected misfortune, and also my peculiar position in the stud farm which I felt but was unable to explain, made me retire into myself. I pondered over the injustice of men, who blamed me for being piebald; I pondered on the inconsistency of mother-love and feminine love in general and on its dependence on physical conditions; and

above all I pondered on the characteristics of that strange race of animals with whom we are so closely connected, and whom we call men—those characteristics which were the source of my own peculiar position in the stud farm, which I felt but could not understand.

The meaning of this peculiarity in people and the characteristic on which it is based was shown me by the following occurrence.

It was in winter at holiday time. I had not been fed or watered all day. As I learnt later this happened because the lad who fed us was drunk. That day the stud groom came in, saw that I had no food, began to use bad language about the missing lad, and then went away.

Next day the lad came into our stable with another groom to give us hay. I noticed that he was particularly pale and sad and that in the expression of his long back especially there was something significant which evoked compassion.

He threw the hay angrily over the grating. I made a move to put my head over his shoulder, but he struck me such a painful blow on the nose with his fist that I started back. Then he kicked me in the belly with his boot.

‘If it hadn’t been for this scurvy beast,’ he said, ‘nothing would have happened!’

‘How’s that?’ inquired the other groom.

‘You see, he doesn’t go to look after the count’s horses, but visits his own twice a day.’

‘What, have they given him the piebald?’ asked the other.

‘Given it, or sold it—the devil only knows! The count’s horses might all starve—he wouldn’t care—but just dare to leave *his* colt without food! “Lie down!” he says, and they begin walloping me! No Christianity in it. He has more pity on a beast than



on a man. He must be an infidel—he counted the strokes himself, the barbarian! The general never flogged like that! My whole back is covered with wales. There's no Christian soul in him!

What they said about flogging and Christianity I understood well enough, but I was quite in the dark as to what they meant by the words '*his colt*', from which I perceived that people considered that there was some connexion between me and the head groom. What that connexion was I could not at all understand then. Only much later when they separated me from the other horses did I learn what it meant. At that time I could not at all understand what they meant by speaking of *me* as being a man's property. The words '*my horse*' applied to me, a live horse, seemed to me as strange as to say '*my land*', '*my air*', or '*my water*'.

But those words had an enormous effect on me. I thought of them constantly and only after long and varied relations with men did I at last understand the meaning they attach to these strange words, which indicate that men are guided in life not by deeds but by words. They like not so much to do or abstain from doing anything, as to be able to apply conventional words to different objects. Such words, considered very important among them, are *my* and *mine*, which they apply to various things, creatures, or objects: even to land, people, and horses. They have agreed that of any given thing only one person may use the word *mine*, and he who in this game of theirs may use that conventional word about the greatest number of things is considered the happiest. Why this is so I do not know, but it is so. For a long time I tried to explain it by some direct advantage they derive from it, but this proved wrong.

For instance many of those who called me their

horse did not ride me, quite other people rode me; nor did they feed me—quite other people did that. Again it was not those who called me *their* horse who treated me kindly, but coachmen, veterinaries, and in general quite other people. Later on, having widened my field of observation, I became convinced that not only as applied to us horses, but in regard to other things, the idea of *mine* has no other basis than a low, mercenary instinct in men, which they call the feeling or right of property. A man who never lives in it says 'my house', but only concerns himself with its building and maintenance; and a tradesman talks of 'my cloth business', but has none of his clothes made of the best cloth that is in his shop.

There are people who call land theirs, though they have never seen that land and never walked on it. There are people who call other people theirs, but have never seen those others, and the whole relationship of the owners to the owned is that they do them harm.

There are men who call women their women or their wives; yet these women live with other men. And men strive in life not to do what they think right, but to call as many things as possible *their own*.

I am now convinced that in this lies the essential difference between men and us. Therefore, not to speak of other things in which we are superior to men, on this ground alone we may boldly say that in the scale of living creatures we stand higher than man. The activity of men, at any rate of those I have had to do with, is guided by words, while ours is guided by deeds.

It was this right to speak of me as *my horse* that the stud groom had obtained, and that was why he had the stable lad flogged. This discovery much astonished me and, together with the thoughts and

opinions aroused in men by my piebald colour, and the thoughtfulness produced in me by my mother's betrayal, caused me to become the serious and thoughtful gelding that I am.

I was thrice unfortunate: I was piebald, I was a gelding, and people considered that I did not belong to God and to myself, as is natural to all living creatures, but that I belonged to the stud groom.

Their thinking this about me had many consequences. The first was that I was kept apart from the other horses, was better fed, oftener taken out on the line, and was broken in at an earlier age. I was first harnessed in my third year. I remember how the stud groom, who imagined I was his, himself began to harness me with a crowd of other grooms, expecting me to prove unruly or to resist. They put ropes round me to lead me into the shafts; put a cross of broad straps on my back and fastened it to the shafts so that I could not kick, while I was only awaiting an opportunity to show my readiness and love of work.

They were surprised that I started like an old horse. They began to brake me and I began to practise trotting. Every day I made greater and greater progress, so that after three months the general himself and many others approved of my pace. But strange to say, just because they considered me not as their own, but as belonging to the head groom, they regarded my paces quite differently.

The stallions who were my brothers were raced, their records were kept, people went to look at them, drove them in gilt sulkies, and expensive horse-cloths were thrown over them. I was driven in a common sulky to Chesménka and other farms on the head groom's business. All this was the result of my being piebald, and especially of my being in

their opinion not the count's, but the head groom's property.

To-morrow, if we are alive, I will tell you the chief consequence for me of this right of property the head groom considered himself to have.

All that day the horses treated Strider respectfully, but Nester's treatment of him was as rough as ever. The peasant's little roan horse neighed again on coming up to the herd, and the chestnut filly again coquettishly replied to him.

## VII

### *Third Night*

THE new moon had risen and its narrow crescent lit up Strider's figure as he once again stood in the middle of the stable yard. The other horses crowded round him.

The gelding continued:

For me the most surprising consequence of my not being the count's, nor God's, but the head groom's, was that the very thing that constitutes our chief merit—a fast pace—was the cause of my banishment. They were driving Swan round the track, and the head groom, returning from Chesménka, drove me up and stopped there. Swan went past. He went well, but all the same he was showing off and had not the exactitude I had developed in myself—so that directly one foot touched the ground another instantaneously lifted and not the slightest effort was lost but every atom of exertion carried me forward. Swan went by us. I pulled towards the ring and the head groom did not check me. 'Here, shall I try my piebald?' he shouted, and when next Swan came abreast of us he let me go. Swan was

already going fast, and so I was left behind during the first round, but in the second I began to gain on him, drew near to his sulky, drew level—and passed him. They tried us again—it was the same thing. I was the faster. 'And this dismayed everybody. The general asked that I should be sold at once to some distant place, so that nothing more should be heard of me: 'Or else the count will get to know of it and there will be trouble!' So they sold me to a horse-dealer as a shaft-horse. I did not remain with him long. An hussar who came to buy remounts bought me. All this was so unfair, so cruel, that I was glad when they took me away from Khrénovo and parted me for ever from all that had been familiar and dear to me. It was too painful for me among them. They had love, honour, freedom, before them; I had labour, humiliation; humiliation, labour, to the end of my life. And why? Because I was piebald, and because of that had to become somebody's horse. . . .

Strider could not continue that evening. An event occurred in the enclosure that upset all the horses. Kupchíkha, a mare big with foal, who had stood listening to the story, suddenly turned away and walked slowly into the shed, and there began to groan so that it drew the attention of all the horses. Then she lay down, then got up again, and again lay down. The old mares understood what was happening to her, but the young ones became excited and, leaving the gelding, surrounded the invalid. Towards morning there was a new foal standing unsteadily on its little legs. Nester shouted to the groom, and the mare and foal were taken into a stall and the other horses driven to the pasture without them.

## VIII

*Fourth Night*

IN the evening when the gate was closed and all had quieted down, the piebald continued:

I have had opportunity to make many observations both of men and horses during the time I passed from hand to hand.

I stayed longest of all with two masters: a prince (an officer of hussars), and later with an old lady who lived near the church of St. Nicholas the Wonder Worker.

The happiest years of my life I spent with the officer of hussars.

Though he was the cause of my ruin, and though he never loved anything or anyone, I loved and still love him for that very reason.

What I liked about him was that he was handsome, happy, rich, and therefore never loved anybody.

You understand that lofty equine feeling of ours. His coldness and my dependence on him gave special strength to my love for him. 'Kill me, drive me till my wind is broken!' I used to think in our good days, 'and I shall be all the happier.'

He bought me from an agent to whom the head groom had sold me for eight hundred rubles, and he did so just because no one else had piebald horses. That was my best time. He had a mistress. I knew this because I took him to her every day and sometimes took them both out.

His mistress was a handsome woman, and he was handsome, and his coachman was handsome, and I loved them all because they were. Life was worth living then. This was how our time was spent: in

the morning the groom came to rub me down—not the coachman himself but the groom. The groom was a lad from among the peasants. He would open the door, let out the steam from the horses, throw out the droppings, take off our rugs, and begin to fidget over our bodies with a brush, and lay whitish streaks of dandruff from a curry-comb on the boards of the floor that was dented by our rough horse-shoes. I would playfully nip his sleeve and paw the ground. Then we were led out one after another to the trough filled with cold water, and the lad would admire the smoothness of my spotted coat which he had polished, my foot with its broad hoof, my legs straight as an arrow, my glossy quarters, and my back wide enough to sleep on. Hay was piled onto the high racks, and the oak cribs were filled with oats. Then Feofán, the head coachman, would come in.

Master and coachman resembled one another. Neither of them was afraid of anything or cared for anyone but himself, and for that reason everybody liked them. Feofán wore a red shirt, black velveteen knickerbockers, and a sleeveless coat. I liked it on a holiday when he would come into the stable, his hair pomaded, and wearing his sleeveless coat, and would shout:

‘Now then, beastie, have you forgotten?’ and push me with the handle of the stable fork, never so as to hurt me but just as a joke. I immediately knew that it was a joke, and laid back an ear, making my teeth click.

We had a black stallion, who drove in a pair. At night they used to put me in harness with him. That Polkán, as he was called, did not understand a joke but was simply vicious as the devil. I was in the stall next to his and sometimes we bit one another seriously. Feofán was not afraid of him.

He would come up and give a shout: it looked as if Polkán would kill him, but no, he'd miss, and Feofán would put the harness on him.

Once he and I bolted down Smiths Bridge Street. Neither my master nor the coachman was frightened; they laughed, shouted at the people, checked us, and turned so that no one was run over.

In their service I lost my best qualities and half my life. They ruined me by watering me wrongly, and they foundered me. . . . Still for all that it was the best time of my life. At twelve o'clock they would come to harness me, black my hoofs, moisten my forelock and mane, and put me in the shafts.

The sledge was of plaited cane upholstered with velvet; the reins were of silk, the harness had silver buckles, sometimes there was a cover of silken fly-net, and altogether it was such that when all the traces and straps were fastened it was difficult to say where the harness ended and the horse began. We were harnessed at ease in the stable. Feofán would come, broader at his hips than at the shoulders, his red belt up under his arms: he would examine the harness, take his seat, wrap his coat round him, put his foot into the sledge stirrup, let off some joke, and for appearance sake always hang a whip over his arm though he hardly ever hit me, and would say, 'Let go!', and playfully stepping from foot to foot I would move out of the gate, and the cook who had come out to empty the slops would stop on the threshold and the peasant who had brought wood into the yard would open his eyes wide. We would come out, go a little way, and stop. Footmen would come out and other coachmen, and a chatter would begin. Everybody would wait: sometimes we had to stand for three hours at the entrance, moving a little way, turning back, and standing again.

At last there would be a stir in the hall: old



Tikhon with his paunch would rush out in his dress coat and cry, 'Drive up!' (In those days there was not that stupid way of saying, 'Forward!' as if one did not know that we moved forward and not back.) Feofán would cluck, drive up, and the prince would hurry out carelessly, as though there were nothing remarkable about the sledge, or the horse, or Feofán—who bent his back and stretched out his arms so that it seemed it would be impossible for him to keep them long in that position. The prince would have a shako on his head and wear a fur coat with a grey beaver collar hiding his rosy, black-browed, handsome face, that should never have been concealed. He would come out clattering his sabre, his spurs, and the brass backs of the heels of his overshoes, stepping over the carpet as if in a hurry and taking no notice of me or Feofán whom everybody but he looked at and admired. Feofán would cluck, I would tug at the reins, and respectably, at a foot pace, we would draw up to the entrance and stop. I would turn my eyes on the prince and jerk my thoroughbred head with its delicate forelock. . . . The prince would be in good spirits and would sometimes jest with Feofán. Feofán would reply, half turning his handsome head, and without lowering his arms would make a scarcely perceptible movement with the reins which I understand: and then one, two, three . . . with ever wider and wider strides, every muscle quivering, and sending the muddy snow against the front of the sledge, I would go. In those days, too, there was none of the present-day stupid habit of crying, 'Oh!' as if the coachman were in pain, instead of the sensible, 'Be off! Take care!' Feofán would shout 'Be off! Look out there!' and the people would step aside and stand craning their necks to see the handsome gelding, the handsome coachman, and the handsome gentleman . . .

I was particularly fond of passing a trotter. When Feofán and I saw at a distance a turn-out worthy of the effort, we would fly like a whirlwind and gradually gain on it. Now, throwing the dirt right to the back of the sledge, I would draw level with the occupant of the vehicle and snort above his head: then I would reach the horse's harness and the arch of his troyka, and then would no longer see it but only hear its sounds in the distance behind. And the prince, Feofán, and I, would all be silent, and pretend to be merely going on our own business and not even to notice those with slow horses whom we happened to meet on our way. I liked to pass another horse, but also liked to meet a good trotter. An instant, a sound, a glance, and we had passed each other and were flying in opposite directions.

The gate creaked and the voices of Nester and Váška were heard.

### *Fifth Night*

The weather began to break up. It had been dull since morning and there was no dew, but it was warm and the mosquitoes were troublesome. As soon as the horses were driven in they collected round the piebald, and he finished his story as follows:

The happy period of my life was soon over. I lived in that way only two years. Towards the end of the second winter the happiest event of my life occurred, and following it came my greatest misfortune. It was during carnival week. I took the prince to the races. Glossy and Bull were running. I don't know what people were doing in the pavilion, but I know the prince came out and ordered Feofán to drive onto the track. I remember how they took

me in and placed me beside Glossy. He was harnessed to a racing sulky and I, just as I was, to a town sledge. I outstripped him at the turn. Roars of laughter and howls of delight greeted me.

When I was led in, a crowd followed me and five or six people offered the prince thousands for me. He only laughed, showing his white teeth.

'No,' he said, 'this isn't a horse, but a friend. I wouldn't sell him for mountains of gold. *Au revoir*, gentlemen!'

He unfastened the sledge apron and got in.

'To Ostózhenska Street!'

That was where his mistress lived, and off we flew . . .

That was our last happy day. We reached her home. He spoke of her as *his*, but she loved someone else and had run away with him. The prince learnt this at her lodgings. It was five o'clock, and without unharnessing me he started in pursuit of her. They did what had never been done to me before, struck me with the whip and made me gallop. For the first time I fell out of step and felt ashamed and wished to correct it, but suddenly I heard the prince shout in an unnatural voice: 'Get on!' The whip whistled through the air and cut me, and I galloped, striking my foot against the iron front of the sledge. We overtook her after going sixteen miles. I got him there, but trembled all night long and could not eat anything. In the morning they gave me water. I drank it and after that was never again the horse that I had been. I was ill, and they tormented me and maimed me—doctoring me, as people call it. My hoofs came off, I had swellings and my legs grew bent; my chest sank in and I became altogether limp and weak. I was sold to a horse-dealer who fed me on carrots and something else and made something of me quite unlike myself,

though good enough to deceive one who did not know. My strength and my pace were gone.

When purchasers came the dealer also tormented me by coming into my stall and beating me with a heavy whip to frighten and madden me. Then he would rub down the stripes on my coat and lead me out.

An old woman bought me of him. She always drove to the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonder Worker, and she used to have her coachman flogged. He used to weep in my stall and I learnt that tears have a pleasant, salty taste. Then the old woman died. Her steward took me to the country and sold me to a hawker. Then I overate myself with wheat and grew still worse. They sold me to a peasant. There I ploughed, had hardly anything to eat, my foot got cut by a ploughshare and I again became ill. Then a gipsy took me in exchange for something. He tormented me terribly and finally sold me to the steward here. And here I am.

All were silent. A sprinkling of rain began to fall.

## IX

### *The Evening After*

As the herd returned home the following evening they encountered their master with a visitor. Zhul-dýba when nearing the house looked askance at the two male figures: one was the young master in his straw hat, the other a tall, stout, bloated military man. The old mare gave the man a side-glance and, swerving, went near him; the others, the young ones, were flustered and hesitated, especially when the master and his visitor purposely stepped among them, pointing something out to one another and talking.

'That one, the dapple grey, I bought of Voékov,' said the master.

'And where did you get that young black mare with the white legs? She's a fine one!' said the visitor. They looked over many of the horses, going forward and stopping them. They noticed the chestnut filly too.

'That is one I kept of Khrénov's saddle-horse breed,' said the master.

They could not see all the horses as they walked past, and the master called to Nester, and the old man, tapping the sides of the piebald with his heels, trotted forward. The piebald limped on one leg but moved in a way that showed that as long as his strength lasted he would not murmur on any account, even if they wanted him to run in that way to the end of the world. He was even ready to gallop, and tried to do so with his right leg.

'There, I can say for certain that there is no better horse in Russia than this one,' said the master, pointing to one of the mares. The visitor admired it. The master walked about excitedly, ran forward, and showed his visitor all the horses, mentioning the origin and pedigree of each.

The visitor evidently found the master's talk dull, but devised some questions to show interest.

'Yes, yes,' he said absent-mindedly.

'Just look,' said the master, not answering a question. 'Look at her legs . . . She cost me a lot but has a third foal already in harness.'

'And trots well?' asked the guest.

So they went past all the horses till there were no more to show. Then they were silent.

'Well, shall we go now?'

'Yes, let's go.'

They went through the gate. The visitor was glad the exhibition was over and that he could now go

to the house where they could eat and drink and smoke, and he grew perceptibly brighter. As he went past Nester, who sat on the piebald waiting for orders, the visitor slapped the piebald's crupper with his big fat hand.

'What an ornamented one!' he said. 'I once had a piebald like him; do you remember my telling you of him?'

The master, finding that it was not his horse that was being spoken about, paid no attention but kept looking round at his own herd.

Suddenly above his ear he heard a dull, weak, senile neigh. It was the piebald that had begun to neigh and had broken off as if ashamed.

Neither the visitor nor the master paid any attention to this neighing, but went into the house.

In the flabby old man Strider had recognized his beloved master, the once brilliant, handsome, and wealthy Serpukhovskóy.

## X

It kept on drizzling. In the stable yard it was gloomy, but in the master's house it was very different. The table was laid in a luxurious drawing-room for a luxurious evening tea, and at it sat the host, the hostess, and their guest.

The hostess, her pregnancy made very noticeable by her figure, her strained convex pose, her plumpness, and especially by her large eyes with their mild inward look, sat by the samovar.

The host held in his hand a box of special, ten-year-old cigars, such as he said no one else had, and he was preparing to boast about them to his guest. The host was a handsome man of about twenty-five, fresh-looking, well cared for, and well groomed. In the house he was wearing a new loose thick suit

made in London. Large expensive pendants hung from his watch-chain. His gold-mounted turquoise shirt studs were also large and massive. He had a beard à la Napoléon III, and the tips of his moustache stuck out in a way that could only have been learned in Paris.

The hostess wore a dress of silk gauze with a large floral pattern of many colours, and large gold hair-pins of a peculiar pattern held up her thick, light-brown hair—beautiful though not all her own. On her arms and hands she wore many bracelets and rings, all of them expensive.

The tea-service was of delicate china and the samovar of silver. A footman, resplendent in dress-coat, white waistcoat and necktie, stood like a statue by the door awaiting orders. The furniture was elegantly carved, and upholstered in bright colours, the wall-paper dark with a large flowered pattern. Beside the table, tinkling the silver bells on its collar, was a particularly fine whippet, whose difficult English name its owners, who neither of them knew English, pronounced badly.

In the corner, surrounded by plants, stood an inlaid piano. Everything gave an impression of newness, luxury, and rarity. Everything was good, but it all bore an imprint of superfluity, wealth, and the absence of intellectual interests.

The host, a lover of trotting races, was sturdy and full-blooded—one of that never-dying race which drives about in sable coats, throws expensive bouquets to actresses, drinks the most expensive wines with the most fashionable labels at the most expensive restaurants, offers prizes engraved with the donor's name, and keeps the most expensive mistresses.

Nikíta Serpukhovskóy, their guest, was a man of over forty, tall, stout, bald-headed, with heavy

moustaches and whiskers. He must once have been very handsome, but had now evidently sunk physically, morally, and financially.

He had such debts that he had been obliged to enter the government service to avoid imprisonment for debt, and was now on his way to a provincial town to become the head of a stud farm, a post some important relatives had obtained for him.

He wore a military coat and blue trousers of a kind only a rich man would have had made for himself. His shirt was of similar quality and so was his English watch. His boots had wonderful soles as thick as a man's finger.

Nikita Serpukhovskóy had during his life run through a fortune of two million rubles, and was now a hundred and twenty thousand in debt. In cases of that kind there always remains a certain momentum of life enabling a man to obtain credit and continue living almost luxuriously for another ten years.

These ten years were however coming to an end, the momentum was exhausted, and life was growing hard for Nikita. He was already beginning to drink, that is, to get fuddled with wine, a thing that used not to happen, though strictly speaking he had never begun or left off drinking. His decline was most noticeable in the restlessness of his glance (his eyes had grown shifty) and in the uncertainty of his voice and movements. This restlessness struck one the more as it had evidently got hold of him only recently, for one could see that he had all his life been accustomed not to be afraid of anything or anybody, and had only recently, through heavy suffering, reached this state of fear so unnatural to him.

His host and hostess noticed this, and exchanged



glances which showed that they understood one another and were only postponing till bedtime a detailed discussion of the subject, putting up meanwhile with poor Nikitá and even showing him attentions.

The sight of his young host's good fortune humiliated Serpukhovskóy, awakening a painful envy in him as he recalled his own irrecoverable past.

'Do you mind my smoking a cigar, Marie?' he asked, addressing the lady in that peculiar tone acquired only by experience—the tone, polite and friendly but not quite respectful, in which men who know the world speak to kept women in contradistinction to wives. Not that he wished to offend her: on the contrary he now wished rather to curry favour with her and with her keeper, though he would on no account have acknowledged the fact to himself. But he was accustomed to speak in that way to such women. He knew she would herself be surprised and even offended were he to treat her as a lady. Besides he had to retain a certain shade of a respectful tone for his friend's real wife. He always treated his friends' mistresses with respect, not because he shared the so-called convictions promulgated in periodicals (he never read trash of that kind) about the respect due to the personality of every man, about the meaninglessness of marriage, and so forth, but because all decent men do so and he was a decent, though fallen, man.

He took a cigar. But his host awkwardly picked up a whole handful and offered them to him.

'Just see how good these are. Take them!'

Serpukhovskóy pushed aside the hand with the cigars, and a gleam of offence and shame showed itself in his eyes.

'Thank you!' he took out his cigar-case. 'Try mine!'

The hostess was sensitive. She noticed his embarrassment and hastened to talk to him.

'I am very fond of cigars. I should smoke myself if everyone about me did not smoke.'

And she smiled her pretty, kindly smile. He smiled in return, but irresolutely. Two of his teeth were missing.

'No, take this!' the tactless host continued. 'The others are weaker. Fritz, *bringen Sie noch einen Kasten,*' he said, '*dort zwei.*'

The German footman brought another box.

'Do you prefer big ones? Strong ones? These are very good. Take them all!' he continued, forcing them on his guest.

He was evidently glad to have someone to boast to of the rare things he possessed, and he noticed nothing amiss. Serpukhovskóy lit his cigar and hastened to resume the conversation they had begun.

'So, how much did you pay for Atlásny?' he asked.

'He cost me a great deal, not less than five thousand, but at any rate I am already safe on him. What colts he gets, I tell you!'

'Do they trot?' asked Serpukhovskóy.

'They trot well! His colt took three prizes this year: in Túla, in Moscow, and in Petersburg; he raced Voékov's Raven. That rascal, the driver, let him make four false steps or he'd have left the other behind the flag.'

'He's a bit green. Too much Dutch blood in him, that's what I say,' remarked Serpukhovskóy.

'Well, but what about the mares? I'll show Goody to you to-morrow. I gave three thousand for her. For Amiable I gave two thousand.'

And the host again began to enumerate his

'Bring another box. There are two there.'

possessions. The hostess saw that this hurt Serpukhovskóy and that he was only pretending to listen.

'Will you have some more tea?' she asked.

'I won't,' replied the host and went on talking. She rose, the host stopped her, embraced her, and kissed her.

As he looked at them Serpukhovskóy for their sakes tried to force a smile, but after the host had got up, embraced her, and led her to the portière, Serpukhovskóy's face suddenly changed. He sighed heavily, and a look of despair showed itself on his flabby face. Even malevolence appeared on it.

The host returned and smilingly sat down opposite him. They were silent awhile.

## XI

'YES, you were saying you bought him of Voékov,' remarked Serpukhovskóy with assumed carelessness.

'Oh yes, that was of Atlásny, you know. I always meant to buy some mares of Dubovítzki, but he had nothing but rubbish left.'

'He has failed . . . ' said Serpukhovskóy, and suddenly stopped and glanced round. He remembered that he owed that bankrupt twenty thousand rubles, and if it came to talking of being bankrupt it was certainly said that he was one. He laughed.

Both again sat silent for a long time. The host considered what he could brag about to his guests. Serpukhovskóy was thinking what he could say to show that he did not consider himself bankrupt. But the minds of both worked with difficulty, in spite of efforts to brace themselves up with cigars. 'When are we going to have a drink?' thought Serpukhovskóy. 'I must certainly have a drink. I shall die of ennui with this fellow,' thought the host.

'Will you be remaining here long?' Serpukhovskóy asked.

'Another month. Well, shall we have supper, eh? Fritz, is it ready?'

They went into the dining-room. There under a hanging lamp stood a table on which were candles and all sorts of extraordinary things: syphons, and little dolls fastened to corks, rare wine in decanters, unusual hors-d'œuvres and vodka. They had a drink, ate a little, drank again, ate again, and their conversation got into swing. Serpukhovskóy was flushed and began to speak without timidity.

They spoke of women and of who kept this one or that, a gipsy, a ballet-girl, or a Frenchwoman.

'And have you given up Mathieu?' asked the host. (That was the woman who had ruined Serpukhovskóy.)

'No, she left me. Ah, my dear fellow, when I recall what I have got through in my life! Now I am really glad when I have a thousand rubles, and am glad to get away from everybody. I can't stand it in Moscow. But what's the good of talking!'

The host found it tiresome to listen to Serpukhovskóy. He wanted to speak about himself—to brag. But Serpukhovskóy also wished to talk about himself, about his brilliant past. His host filled his glass for him and waited for him to stop, so that he might tell him about himself and how his stud was now arranged as no one had ever had a stud arranged before. And that his Marie loved him with her heart and not merely for his wealth.

'I wanted to tell you that in my stud . . .' he began, but Serpukhovskóy interrupted him.

'I may say that there was a time,' Serpukhovskóy began, 'when I liked to live well and knew how to do it. Now you talk about trotting—tell me which is your fastest horse.'

The host, glad of an opportunity to tell me about his stud, was beginning, when Serpukhovsk<sup>y</sup> again interrupted him.

'Yes, yes,' he said, 'but you breeders do it just of vanity and not for pleasure, not for the joy of it. It was different with me. You know I told you I had a driving-horse, a piebald with just the same kind of spots as the one your keeper was riding. Oh, what a horse that was! You can't possibly know: it was in 1842, when I had just come to Moscow; I went to a horse-dealer and there I saw a well-bred piebald gelding. I liked him. The price? One thousand rubles. I liked him, so I took him and began to drive with him. I never had, and you have not and never will have, such a horse. I never knew one like him for speed and for strength. You were a boy then and couldn't have known, but you may have heard of him. All Moscow was talking about him.'

'Yes, I heard of him,' the host unwillingly replied. 'But what I wished to say about mine . . .'

'Ah, then you did hear! I bought him just as I was, without his pedigree and without a certificate: it was only afterwards that I got to know Voëko and found out. He was a colt by Affable I. Strid—because of his long strides. On account of his piebald spots he was removed from the Khrénov stud and given to the head keeper, who had him castrated and sold him to a horse-dealer. There are no such horses now, my dear chap. Ah, those were days! Ah, vanished youth!'—and he sang the words of the gipsy song. He was getting tipsy.—'Ah those were good times. I was twenty-five and had eighty thousand rubles a year, not a single grey hair and all my teeth like pearls. . . . Whatever I touched succeeded, and now it is all ended . . .'

'But there was not the same mettlesomeness then,' said the host, availing himself of the pause

't me tell you that my first horses began to trot about . . .'

Your horses! But they used to be more mettlesome . . .'

How—more mettlesome?"

'Yes, more mettlesome! I remember as if it were day how I drove him once to the trotting races in Moscow. No horse of mine was running. I did not care for trotters, mine were thoroughbreds: General Goulet, Mahomet. I drove up with my piebald. My driver was a fine fellow, I was fond of him, but he also took to drink. . . . Well, so I got there.

"Serpukhovskóy," I was asked, "When are you going to keep trotters?" "The devil take your trotters!" I replied. "I have a piebald hack that will outpace all your trotters!" "Oh no, he won't!" "I'll bet a thousand rubles!" Agreed, and they started. He came in five seconds ahead and I won a thousand rubles. But what of it? I did a hundred starts<sup>1</sup> in three hours with a troyka of thoroughbreds. All Moscow knows it.'

And Serpukhovskóy began to brag so glibly and continuously that his host could not get a single word in and sat opposite him with a dejected countenance, filling up his own and his guest's glass every now and then by way of distraction.

The dawn was breaking and still they sat there. It became intolerably dull for the host. He got up. 'If we are to go to bed, let's go!' said Serpukhovskóy rising, and reeling and puffing he went to the room prepared for him.

<sup>1</sup> The host was lying beside his mistress.

No, he is unendurable,' he said. 'He gets drunk and swaggers incessantly.'

And makes up to me.'

<sup>1</sup> A little over sixty-six miles.

'I'm afraid he'll be asking for money.'

Serpukhovskóy was lying on the bed in clothes, breathing heavily.

'I must have been lying a lot,' he thought. 'Well, no matter! The wife was good, but he is an awful swine. 'There's something cheap about him. And I'm an awful swine,' he said to himself and laughed aloud. 'First I used to keep women, and now I'm kept. Yes, the Winkler girl will support me. I take money of her. Serves him right. Still, I must undress. Can't get my boots off. Hullo! Hullo!' he called out, but the man who had been told off to wait on him had long since gone to bed.

He sat down, took off his coat and waistcoat and somehow managed to kick off his trousers, but for long time could not get his boots off—his stomach being in the way. He got one off at last and struggled for a long time with the other, panting and becoming exhausted. And so with 'foot in the boot-top he rolled over and began snore, filling the room with a smell of tobacco, with a disagreeable old age.

## XII

IF Strider recalled anything that night, he was distracted by Váška, who threw a rug over him, galloped off on him, and kept him standing till morning the door of a tavern, near a peasant horse. They licked one another. In the morning when Strider returned to the herd he kept rubbing himself.

'Something itches dreadfully,' he thought.

Five days passed. They called in a veterinarian who said cheerfully:

'It's the itch, let me sell him to the gipsies.'

'What's the use? Cut his throat, and get it done to-day.'

The morning was calm and clear. The herd went pasture, but Strider was left behind. A strange man came—thin, dark, and dirty, in a coat splashed with something black. It was the knacker. Without looking at Strider he took him by the halter they had put on him and led him away. Strider went quietly without looking round, dragging along as usual and catching his hind feet in the straw.

When they were out of the gate he strained towards the well, but the knacker jerked his halter, saying: 'Not worth while.'

The knacker and Váška, who followed behind, went to a hollow behind the brick barn and stopped as if there were something peculiar about this very ordinary place. The knacker, handing the halter to Váška, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and produced a knife and a whetstone from his boot-g. The gelding stretched towards the halter meaning to chew it a little from dullness, but he could not reach it. He sighed and closed his eyes. His nether lip hung down, disclosing his worn lower teeth, and he began to drowse to the sound of the sharpening of the knife. Only his swollen, hanging, outstretched leg kept jerking. Suddenly he felt himself being taken by the lower jaw and his head lifted. He opened his eyes. There were two men in front of him; one was sniffing at the knacker, the other was sitting and watching the gelding as if expecting something from him. The gelding looked at them and began to rub his jaw against the arm that was holding him.

'Want to doctor me probably—well, let them!' he thought.

And in fact he felt that something had been done to his throat. It hurt, and he shuddered and gave a kick with one foot, but restrained himself and waited for what would follow. . . . Then he felt



something liquid streaming down his neck and chin. He heaved a profound sigh and felt much better.

The whole burden of his life was eased.

He closed his eyes and began to droop his head. No one was holding it. Then his legs quivered and his whole body swayed. He was not so much frightened as surprised.

Everything was so new to him. He was surprised and started forward and upward, but instead of this, in moving from the spot his legs got entangled, he began to fall sideways, and trying to take a step he fell forward and down on his left side.

The knacker waited till the convulsions had ceased; drove away the dogs that had crept near, took the gelding by the legs, turned him on his back, told Vaska to hold a leg, and began to skin the horse.

'It was a horse, too,' remarked Vaska.

'If he had been better fed the skin would have been fine,' said the knacker.

The herd returned down hill in the evening, and those on the left saw down below something round which dogs were busy and above which hawks and crows were flying. One of the dogs, pressing its paws against the carcass and swinging his head, with a crackling sound tore off what had seized hold of. The chestnut filly stopped, stretched out her head and neck, and sniffed the air for a long time. They could hardly drive her away.

At dawn, in a ravine of the old forest, down in an overgrown glade, big-headed wolf cubs were howling joyfully. There were five of them: four almost alike and one little one with a head bigger than its body. A lean old wolf who was shedding her coat, dragging her full belly with its hanging dugs along the ground, came out of the bushes and sat down in front of the cubs. The cubs came and stood round

in a semi-circle. She went up to the smallest, and bending her knee and holding her muzzle down, made some convulsive movements, and opening her large sharp-toothed jaws disgorged a large piece of horseflesh. The bigger cubs rushed towards her, but she moved threateningly at them. I let the little one have it all. The little one, howling as if in anger, pulled the horseflesh under him and began to gorge. In the same way the other wolf coughed up a piece for the second, the third, and all five of them, and then lay down in front of them to rest.

A week later only a large skull and two shoulder-blades lay behind the barn, the rest had all been eaten away. In summer a peasant, collecting bones, carried away these shoulder-blades and skull and put them to use.

The dead body of Serpukhovskóy, which had talked about the earth eating and drinking, was not under ground much later. Neither his skin, nor his flesh, nor his bones, were of any use.

Just as for the last twenty years his body that had talked the earth had been a great burden to everybody, so the putting away of that body was again an additional trouble to people. He had not been wanted by anybody for a long time and had only been a burden, yet the dead who bury their dead found it necessary to clothe that swollen body, which at once began to decompose, in a good uniform and good boots and put it into a new and expensive coffin with new tassels at its four corners, and then to place that coffin in another coffin of lead, take it to Moscow and there dig up some long-buried human bones, and to hide in that particular this decomposing maggotty body in its new uniform and polished boots, and cover it all up in the earth.

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